



CITY OF STATESBORO
WORK SESSION MINUTES
NOVEMBER 19, 2024

Mayor & Council Work Session

50 East Main Street

4:00 PM

A Work Session of the Statesboro City Council was held on November 19, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street. Present was Mayor Jonathan McCollar and Council Members: Paulette Chavers, John Riggs, and Shari Barr. Also present was City Clerk Leah Harden, City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles City Attorney Cain Smith and Public Affairs Manager Layne Phillips and Councilmember elect Tangie Johnson. Absent was Councilmember Ginny Hendley.

Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the meeting to order.

1. Transportation Master Plan

Glenn Coyne with GMC presented an update for the Long Range Transportation Plan. The drafts have been completed since starting a year ago. We have had four public meetings, an online community survey, website updates, technical advisory committee meetings, Mayor and City Council updates and Board of Commissioners updates. Staff has the final documents being reviewed for final edits and formatting. The full transportation update is 110 pages, there is an executive summary that is about 35 pages long. We started with the 87 projects that were organized by type, this is done for funding reasons, and then listed in priority order, and this was done for the city and the county. Kalanos Johnson spoke to mayor and council members on the transportation planning process, public input, travel demand model, evaluation criteria, and funding availability. The fiscally constrained plan for the City of Statesboro, 30 projects funded from FY 2025-FY 2030, representing over \$27 million dollars in projects. The Long Range Transportation Plan update is to improve the transportation system over the next 5 years. Together, we have identified existing and future transportation challenges for all travel modes; developed recommendations with both public input and data analysis and prioritized projects to be implemented within available funding limits.

2. Natural Gas Presentation

Director of Public Utilities Steve Hotchkiss presented to Mayor and Council public awareness for emergency and public officials. As part of the safety programs, we are required to make public officials and the public aware that there is a gas system so they can know what to do in case of an emergency. Natural gas is regulated by DOT, a subpart of DOT regulations PHMSA pipeline safety, that's what we operate under. Natural gas is produced in the same place as oil, they are usually discovered in the same fields. Many years ago organic matter decomposed and turned into petroleum and natural gas that today is drilled and drawn out of the ground. Most of it used to come from the Gulf of Mexico, now most of it shifted onshore to fracking from Texas and Oklahoma and even the Northeast PA and around that region. Natural gas is used for electric power, vehicle fuel, pipeline fuel, and oil & gas industry operations, industrial, commercial and residential. Benefits of natural gas are it's the cleanest burning fuel of all fossil fuels, the majority of the natural gas used in the U.S. comes from North America, energy efficient, dependable source of energy with proven reserves for the foreseeable future. We get our natural gas from Southern Natural Gas, they deliver it to the "City Gate" that is where we take possession of the gas and it transfers over to our responsibility and we distribute it out to our customers' through our own distribution system. Natural gas pipelines consist of steel and/or plastic which are designed to operate at various pressures. Main lines are typically 2 inches in diameter and when installed are located roughly 2 feet below the surface. Service lines are typically ½" to ¾" in diameter and buried 12-18 inches below the surface. We serve Statesboro, Metter and Sylvania, we take possession of our gas about 3 miles outside of Sylvania at the "City Gate", and it goes all the way out to the county line at I16. Most natural gas facilities are

underground, it may not be always apparent where, or even if, natural gas pipelines are present. One of the most important ways to determine if pipelines are in your area is to look around you. Pipelines are marked by aboveground signs to give notice to the public of the presence of a pipeline in the general area. These signs will also denote the product being carried in the pipeline along with the company's name and 24 hour contact information. Other indicators of pipelines are pipeline right of ways, regulator stations. 811 IS A FFC-designated national number for homeowners and professional excavators to call before digging, the calls are directed to the local center and the affected utilities will then mark underground lines for free. It is Georgia law to call and get a dig ticket, if a contractor doesn't call 811 and hits a pipeline he is 100% responsible for the damage plus the outage. We use radio ads, direct mailings to customers, newspaper ads and group meetings to try to educate the public on the 811 system. The characteristics that make natural gas safe are it's almost 96% pure methane when it comes out of the ground, it's odorless, colorless, tasteless, and nontoxic. You cannot be poisoned by it, but you can suffocate. At the "City Gate" we odorize the gas with "mercaptan" to give a unique smell that smells like rotten eggs. Other gases such as propane also have an odorant added to give it its own unique smell as well. Steve went over leak responses for what to do when you suspect a leak in your home as well as how to respond to a customer who calls about a suspected leak in their home.

3. Housing Rehabilitation / Reconstruction Presentation

Justin Williams with the planning department presented mayor and council with an update on the Housing Rehabilitation Program. The program has been active since 2022, and was awarded \$3.7 million towards both rehab and reconstruction in the community, and we have worked through multiple properties, correcting some small issues, and some major. Before and after rehab photos were shared with mayor and council. After review of the second group of homes it was determined that only a small number were available for rehabilitation, this substantially decreases the amount of ARPA funds that could be committed in an additional rehab bid packet. The first reconstructed home is now occupied. The second reconstruction home has an issued permit for demolition and reconstruction, and is currently underway. On September 11, bids were opened to award contracts on an additional 4 reconstruction homes. Mayor and council were presented with photos for the completed reconstruction, ongoing and potential projects. The second application results, due to the number of individuals in the program who have lived in dilapidated homes from the beginning of the program, it is recommended that the highest rated reconstruction homes, be packaged with the remaining rehab houses. Ratings for the program is broken into a number of factors: income categories, special population scores (disability or elderly), severe system rating, and rehabilitation cost & cost effectiveness.

4. Chip Grant Application

Justin Williams from the planning department spoke to mayor and council about the Community Home Investment Program (CHIP). The Georgia Department of Community Affairs releases an application for the CHIP program annually. For the 2024 program, 5 awards will be made to the top scoring applications for new construction/reconstruction of affordable single-family homes, we are a senior year community and we have been given a competitive edge in the Notice of Funding Eligibility. We are looking to apply, we have up to \$1.5 million that we could potentially apply for. In 2023, the city in collaboration with Agape Worship Center demolished multiple dilapidated units on Pine Street. These vacant lots are currently underutilized and a part of the overall development strategy for the neighborhood. Mayor and council were shown before and after pictures of a part of Pine Street. These lots are eligible for CHIP Funding because of their location, and there are some houses that are not currently treated by the Housing Rehabilitation Program in the area that could also benefit from the funding. The project would consist of the development of the lots owned by Agape Worship Center by our Local Habitat for Humanity affiliate, with additional reconstruction homes treated through the bid process. A photo of the available Pine St. lots were shown to Mayor and Council. If the resolution is approved to apply for the CHIP Grant, city staff will begin the contracting process in order to finalize the application.

Councilmember Paulette Chavers inquired about the city making an allowance for tiny homes within the City of Statesboro.

City Manager Charles Penny stated we would need to get with our consultant Caleb Racicot with TSW to do some research and provide insight about tiny homes in Statesboro. A presentation will be made in January 2025 about this item.

5. Unified Development Code Amendments

Director of Planning, Kathy Fields presented an update on the Unified Development Code. September 19, 2023 the City Council adopted the Unified Development Code in order to enhance the dated language found in the prior zoning and subdivision ordinances. Since adoption there has been a significant decrease in the number of variances being requested, as more flexibility has been added to allow for development. A number of issues have emerged in the ordinances since that time. Some sections of the ordinance have been noted as having inconsistencies not identified in the original intent of the ordinance. Examples include simple language such as height allowances referring to separate heights in reference tables, and items listed for special use permits while actually being considered a “by-right” use. Additional changes include, some sections have been added with good intent, but cannot be well implemented with the current development patterns of the city, there also needs to be additional clarification on the number of items directly related to the development and protection of multi-family residences across the city. Staff is currently preparing a list of amendments to the ordinance for the Council. These items will be brought to the planning commission on December 3rd for the recommendation, followed by the first reading by the Council on the 17th.

6. InvoiceCloud Presentation

Director of Finance, Cindy West went over InvoiceCloud with Mayor and Council. In an effort to continue to improve customer service we would like to contract with InvoiceCloud as an enhancement to our current software. InvoiceCloud would ease the process for on-time and registered payments. Currently a customer has to know the exact amount of their last payment to make any payments online. The need to know the last payment amount is no longer needed with InvoiceCloud and the number of phone calls to a customer service representative is reduced. InvoiceCloud would notify customers enrolled in auto pay of expiring credit cards automatically and allow them to update it anytime in the portal, it would also enable those not signed up for e-billing to receive email and text notifications automatically. Currently, only those enrolled in e-billing/paperless get any kind of electronic notification. Once a customer uses InvoiceCloud, they would receive electronic notifications regarding their bill. This would work to encourage more people to enroll in e-billing, but we are not proposing eliminating paper bills. There would be a 2.5% online convenience fee, customers currently pay a 2% fee for both inhouse and online. The City pays 1.25% convenience fee for inhouse and online credit card payments. The credit card transaction fee to the City would be reduced by \$.25 per transaction, we currently pay \$1.35 per transaction. By implementing InvoiceCloud, the City could have a potential savings of \$34,600 a year.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 pm.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk