

**MINUTES**  
**WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION**  
**MONDAY, JULY 18, 2022 – 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 July 18, 2022, at 5:00pm by Mayor Michael-Angelo James. The meeting was held in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. Present was Mayor James, Commissioners Norman Davis, Katrena Felder, Henry Strickland, Sheinita Bennett and Mayor Pro Tem Diane Hopkins

**A. Invocation**

Invocation was led by James Smart, Public Works Director

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

**II. GUESTS:**

Dr. Earl Martin - 902 Elizabeth Street, Waycross Ga.-

Mr. Martin wanted to know if there was an update on the repairs being done on Albany Street. Mr. Smart the Public Works director informed him and all the citizens that the rain was the hold up and as soon as it clears the work will resume.

Earl Ellis - 607 Spurgeon Street, Waycross Ga.-

Mr. Ellis wanted to address the Commission to have an opportunity to be allowed to come and give a presentation to the Commission before a decision is made. He had concerns of a biased situation in the process that did not allow him a fair opportunity to be in the top number to present. Commissioner Davis asked Marc Hawkins, Interim City Manager if he could check into the situation and get back with the Commission. Commissioner Bennett asked two questions of Mr. Ellis, 1.) What makes him better than the suggested company selected? 2.) Does he serve any other businesses in this area?

Michael Hargrove - 2012 Alice Street, Waycross Ga.-

Mr. Hargrove spoke briefly on the agenda and how he would grade the effort that goes into providing additional information on the items listed on the agenda. He went on to express his opinion on the need to have a member of the GMA to come and speak on the topic of the City Manager.

**III. TRAVEL/TRAINING SCHEDULE AND REQUESTS**

**IV. PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION**

**A. Bids:**

1. Bid # FY 22-35 Benefits Consulting and Broker Services

Human Resources Director, Marissa Hendrix, presented this bid. Mrs. Hendrix started by directing the Commissioners attention to their workbooks, stating that a list numbered 1-6 was provided. Hendrix then gave the committee's recommendation of the lowest and best bid. The recommendation was to award the bid to Gallagher/5 Points.

Mayor James asked the Commissioners were there any questions?

Commissioner Sheinita Bennett asked HR Director, Marissa Hendrix, so are you all suggesting that this is who we go with? Hendrix replied, yes ma'am. Bennett then said, so it's a matter of opinion. Hendrix stated this is based on the panel's recommendation. Commissioner Hopkins said she couldn't understand what Commissioner Bennett said, asking her to restate. Commissioner Bennett then rephrased saying, they're suggesting that we go with Gallagher. Don't Tell Me Who To Go With, just let us pick who we want to go with. She said, give us that opportunity. She went on to say that she understand that it's their suggestion, their opinion. She said, that's only because of some information that we just heard of. Commissioner Hopkins then informed the Mayor that she has a question. Hopkins asked Mrs. Hendrix, who was on the panel? Hendrix replied, Chief Eddins, James Smart, Mamie Jackson, and herself. Hopkins then asked was that the lowest bid? Hendrix replied, yes. She also stated that the next best was MSI at 4%.

Rick Currie asked Mayor James, do we have a consensus to accept the recommendation of the HR Director so that he can finish preparing the resolution?

Mayor James ask for a vote by Districts.

District 1-Commissioner Norman Davis, said he shares the same concerns as District 2.

District 2-Commissioner Sheinita Bennett voted NO

District 3-Commissioner Katrena Felder stated she would like more clarification.

District 4-Commissioner Diane Hopkins voted Yes.

District 5-Henry Strickland voted Yes.

Mayor James then stated, we do not have 3. Mr. Currie then stated, we will proceed then with no insurance for employees after August 1, 2022. Mayor James said, it sounds like we will not have any coverage.

Commissioner Davis requested the floor. He then stated that, this is the case unless the commissioners choose the alternate.

Mayor James spoke briefly about there being no decision made and how are we to proceed forward...

Commissioner Sheinita Bennett said, I refuse to entertain underhand stuff. It's not about what Mr. Ellis said, my vote was always going to be MSI because I know how they work for us with the Sheriff's Department, but my thing is, I do not need HR to come and tell me who is more beneficial. Let me pick and choose who I want. That's all I was saying. Bennett said, I understand what he was saying, but my ultimate pick was not going to be him. I understand the citizens for the City, they need their insurance, and that was always my big, big, big advocate for them, was to have their insurance regardless. I don't want to walk away from here with them not having their insurance. Everybody knows that's what I wanted, and I want to be fair. I don't care about who's friends with who, or who is going to

get this, or who is going to get that. I want what's best for the citizens who put in their hard-earned time and years.

That's what I want. I don't need them to tell me who they feel like is the best person. Give us the opportunity to vote who we want.

Commissioner Hopkins requested the floor once more.

Hopkins asked, Mamie Jackson and Marissa Hendrix if the process used to select the finalist was the same process that we had always used? Purchasing Director, Mamie Jackson answered, Yes Ma'am. Hopkins then asked if the recommendation was given by a panel of employees? Ms. Jackson answered, Yes Ma'am. Hopkins went on to explain that this is the employees' insurance. She clarified, that we as Commissioners do not utilize these benefits, but we want the best for our staff. Hopkins went on to ask if Gallagher and MSI were the best bids when the panel graded. Ms. Jackson replied, Yes Ma'am. Hopkins asked, if the two were somewhat similar or close. Ms. Jackson answered, Yes. Then Jackson went on to expound on the process, how many bids were received, and the rankings of those submitted.

Commissioner Hopkins then said to Mayor James, this is why I made my decision. Hopkins said, first of all, I trust our staff, and I know that when you all put a panel together that you are doing it for the benefit for all of the employees of the City. Hopkins said, we are not included in this insurance, so we want you all to have the very best. She said, according to this, you all have picked what this City needs and what is the best, and they were the lower bid as well.

Hendrix explained, that in the second interview the 2 finalist were sent a questionnaire and they had time to prepare to answer specific questions. She informed the Commission that MSI skipped questions, and appeared to be unprepared. She went on to explain that Gallagher was able to answer their questions, and gave a flat 3% rate. She explained that by going with Gallagher we get two companies for the price of one at a lower percentage. Hendrix said, we are here to get the best option for our employees.

Commissioner Hopkins then stated, that she feels very comfortable that Hendrix, Jackson, and the panel have made the very best decision possible.

Commissioner Felder requested the floor.

Commissioner Felder thanked Mrs. Hendrix for the clarity that was given. Felder, then asked if there were letters sent to the remaining brokers detailing why they were not chosen? Ms. Jackson answered, letters will be sent after the Commission's approval. Ms. Felder asked if maybe somewhere the process was unclear to Mr. Ellis. Ms. Jackson replied, I think maybe that's what it was, there was some information that he did not understand or was confusing.

Then Mayor then explained that we need to know how this works prior to coming into these meetings. He said that it was good that the process was explained so that we all have a clear understanding.

Mayor James then took a moment to point out that we are asking for more than we are willing to give. He spoke briefly to how diligent the City Clerk and staff are working to get us caught up, and to get information up on our website. He said we are morphing people to

a place. He said, it almost seems as if we don't trust what we have. It's almost sounding as if we don't believe in who we have. We say a bunch of words and at the end of the day, but we don't treat the people the same way that we say... Mayor James said, it seems that we are indicting people without giving people the credit for what they have done. He said, when we don't understand something asking questions. He also encouraged to leave their feelings out of this.

Commissioner Strickland wanted to speak to the HR Director and to Purchasing. Strickland said, we get our agendas on Friday. He said all of this information is included in our workbook. The Commissioner thanked Jackson and Hendrix for taking the time to do their best for the City. Strickland stated, that he agreed with the decision. He said that the information that was included in the workbook explained why the decision was made. He thanked the ladies again.

Davis added, he appreciates all of the hard work that the employees do, but he supports the concerns of Commissioners as well. He said they have to live with the outcome of whatever decision they make. He went on to say that he feels that the young man who came before the commission feels that someone put their finger on the scale. He commended the commissioners for being very serious about their positions. He said we need to start thinking about the fairness of situations, the integrity of our vote. Davis said that we need to table this for a while because he feels that there's a cloud here.

Strickland, immediately said that we can't. The employees will not have insurance. Mayor James quickly agreed.

Commissioner Felder voiced that she appreciates everyone's thoughts. Felder went on to say that whereas the insurance is concerned, we have a process in place here, and she's confident that the process was followed. Felder added, it is critical that everyone understands the process and the steps that the City takes to ensure that it is a fair and just process. Commissioner Felder thanked Ms. Jackson and Mrs. Hendrix again for the clarity.

Mayor James asked again for the vote individually.

District 1- Davis stated that he still has concerns.

District 2- Bennett voted for MSI.

District 3- Felder voted Yes, for the recommendation.

District 4- Hopkins voted Yes, for the recommendation.

District 5- Strickland said I vote for Gallagher.

Commissioner Strickland congratulated Commissioner Bennett on bringing the staff what she saw was needed when she walked through the door.

2. Surplus Property WAYX 23-02

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday Agenda.

**B. Discussion of Taxes and New Preliminary Tax Digest –**

Roger Collins spoke briefly informing the commission of the Reassessed properties with tax season approaching, he wanted to talk about the rollback and the process of all that it entails as for the pros and cons.

**C. Discussion of Voting Precincts –**

Carlos Nelson came to provide the commission with some clarity regarding staffing, voter machine inventories and how what they have is used. He further talked about the comparison to neighboring counties number of polling stations and wanted to ensure the Commission that the numbers provided by another citizen was incorrect. He included a report of neighboring counties election personnel and voter turnouts. Commissioner Davis wanted to know if when a precinct is determined is there consideration of locality of the voter to that particular precinct? Mr. Nelson explained that the precincts were done years ago, and that precincts were selected where accessible.

**D. Discussion of Proposed Amendment to FY2023 Budget –**

Greg Smith gave an update of information on the budget. He is going to still give a proposal on the salary increase in the near future.

**E. Discussion of Grant for Waycross Police Department -**

Chief Tommy Cox spoke briefly of a small grant awarded to have the former Officer Davis name put on the Memorial Wall.

**F. Discussion of City Manager – Larry Hanson, CEO/Georgia Municipal Association**

Mr. Hanson did not show up for this meeting.

**G. Discussion of Change Order for Armory**

Interim City Manager, Marc Hawking gave a summary of the history and plans of the new proposal. He stated we need direction on where we're going. Commissioner Davis tried to give some clarity on the process of how it started and where it is now. Commissioner Hopkins stated to Marc that she didn't understand the information presented in the commissioners' workbook and asked if he could elaborate. Purchasing Director, Mamie Jackson gave detailed information on the cost and what has already been paid. At the end there was a consensus to get an itemized statement from the architect to bring back to the Commission for further discussion.

**H. Privilege License Renewals: n/a**

**I. Privilege Licenses: n/a**

**J. Proposed Ordinances:**

1. An Ordinance to Amend the Code of Ordinances of the City of Waycross, Georgia; To Amend Chapter 34 – Taxation, Licenses, and Business Regulations, Article IV. –

Occupational Tax, Section 34-91 and Article XII. – Yard Sales, Section 34-354, Pertaining to Religious and Charitable Organizations Exempt from Federal Taxation; To Provide for Codification; To Provide for Severability; To Repeal Conflicting Ordinances; To Provide for an Effective Date; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on the agenda for Tuesday.

**K. Proposed Resolutions:**

1. A Resolution of the City of Waycross, Georgia, To Award Contract to \_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_, for the City's Insurance Benefits, Consulting, and Broker Services; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on the agenda for Tuesday.

2. A Resolution of the City of Waycross, Georgia, To Declare a Certain 2011 Police Vehicle to be Surplused Property; To Provide for Its Sale on govdeals.com; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on the agenda for Tuesday.

3. A Resolution of the City of Waycross, Georgia, To Hold the City Commission Work Session Set for the Monday Before the First Tuesday in the Month of September 6, 2022, on September 6, 2022; and of Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on the agenda for Tuesday.

4. A Resolution of the City of Waycross, Georgia, To Authorize Execution of a Managed Security Change Order to the Contract with VC3, Inc. for Enhanced Anti-spam Protection, and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on the agenda for Tuesday.

5. A Resolution of the City of Waycross, Georgia, To Include City Employees Who are Eligible for Retirement Benefits after July 1, 2022, to also Receive City's Health Insurance Benefit, and for Other Purposes.

Commissioner Hopkins wants a dollar amount to see what the city is looking at paying out. Sher posed this question to Greg Smith the Finance Director.

There was a consensus to place this on the agenda for Tuesday.

**L. City Attorney's Report:**

Rick Curry, spoke on the Charter sec-36, auditing and to make sure that it is done once a year, every 6 months as per law.

**M. City Manager's Report:**

1. Department Report:

Marissa Hendrix, HR- gave a presentation on employee status.

**N. Last Call and/or Adjourn to Executive Session**

There was a motion to adjourn to Executive Session by Commissioner Felder seconded by Commissioner Strickland. All voted in favor motioned passed. Went into executive session to discuss personnel at 7:23 p.m.

**O. Adjournment**

**CITY OF WAYCROSS**

BY: *Michael Angelo James*  
**MICHAEL-ANGELO JAMES, Mayor**

ATTEST:

*Jacqueline Powell*  
**JACQUALINE POWELL, City Clerk**

