

**MINUTES**  
**WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION**  
**MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 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 on Monday, December 16, 2024, at 5:00 pm by Mayor James. The meeting was held in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. Present were Commissioners Sheinita Bennett and Mayor Pro Temp, Alvin Nelson, Diane Hopkins, Katrena Felder, and Shawn Roberts

A. Invocation: Mayor Michael-Angelo James

Invocation led by Johnny Mitcham

B. Pledge of Allegiance

**II. GUESTS:**

Tim Peacock, 906 Euclid Street, Waycross Ga. 31501- spoke on the process of the Ethics Committee formation and procedures.

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

A. Eggs & Issues – January 13-14, 2024 – Atlanta, GA

B. GMA – Cities United Summit – January 24-27, 2024 – Atlanta, GA

**IV. PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION \*\*\*SEE DISCUSSION NOTES\*\*\***

A. Bids:

1. WAYX 25-01 Surplus Land N. Augusta Ave (Scout Lake) - FOR VOTE
2. Warehouse Repair & Renovation

B. Discussion Items:

1. Finance Update:
  - a. ARPA Update
  - b. Utility Conversion Study Results - Decision
  - c. Fire Department Pay Re-alignment
  - d. COLA Decision
  - e. Equipment Repair: Backhoe (*Public Works*)

2. Infrastructure:

- a. Blackshear Meter Project
- b. Stormwater Policy Update
- c. Lifecycle Program
- d. SPLOST Way Ahead

3. January Committee/Board Appointments:

a. **Election of Mayor Tempore'**

b. **Pronouncement of City Officers** (*Presented by Mayor and Confirmed by Commission*)

- 1. **City Attorney:** Huey W. Spearman
- 2. **Assistant City Attorney:**
- 3. **Official Organ:** Waycross Journal-Herald
- 4. **City Depository:** Ameris Bank  
Waycross Bank & Trust
- 5. **City Auditor:** Mauldin & Jenkins CPAs
- 6. **City Engineer:** ESG Engineering
- 7. **Municipal Court Judge:** Judge Douglas W. Gibson
- 8. **Municipal Court Judge Pro-Tempore':** Andrienne Gibson
- 9. **Insurance Agents:** Gallagher/Five Points  
Oakbridge Insurance Company  
Cigna Health, Anthem Vision, New York Life & AD&D  
Gallagher Insurance  
Travelers Liability & Workers Comp
- 10. **City Election Superintendent:** Ware County Board of Elections and Registration

c.. **Appointment to Executive Positions Recommended by Mayor and Confirmed by the Commission:**

*(Mayor and/or City Manager are Automatic Appointees to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, Waycross-Ware Development Authority, Transportation Planning Coordinating Committee and Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Waycross Development Authority)*

- 1. **Downtown Waycross Development Authority** Mayor
- 2. **Library Board of Trustees:** Ex-Officio:
- 3. **Waycross Convention & Visitors Bureau:** Post 2: Clint Bowman  
*(Reappointment)*
- 4. **South Georgia Regional Commission:** Mayor
- 5. **Transportation Planning Coordinating Committee:** Mayor

- 6. **Ware County Board of Health:** Mayor
- 7. **Waycross-Ware Co Development Authority:** Mayor
- 8. **Waycross-Ware County Chamber of Commerce:** Mayor

d. **Pension Committee for Retirement Fund\***

*(Recommended by Mayor and Confirmed by City Commission) (Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, and Personnel Analyst & Risk Management Employee are Automatic Appointees:*

- 1. **Mayor** Michael-Angelo James
- 2. **City Manager** Ulysses D. Rayford
- 3. **City Attorney** Huey W. Spearman
- 4. **Finance Director** Greg Smith
- 5. **City Commissioner**
- 6. **Human Resources Director** Marissa Hendrix

- 4. Ethics Board Recommendations
- 5. Computer Information & Software System Upgrades Update
- 6. Charter Changes
- 7. Director Temp Fills
- 8. Handbook Adoption
- 9. Credit Card Policy Update
- 10. City Manager Contract
- 11. GDOT MOU

C. **Privilege Licenses Renewals:**

- 1. Dollar General Store #9826, H. Axson, 1803 Knight Avenue, Suite J. Waycross, Ga. 31501, Beer and Wine Package Sales Only
- 2. Gooley's Pizza Too, Inc, S. Meis, 910 Memorial Drove, Waycross Ga. Beer, Consumption on Premises Only
- 3. The Traffic Light Lounge, S. James, 650 Oak Street, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine and Liquor, Consumption on Premises Only
- 4. Shree Raj 610 Inc, R. Patel, 610 Memorial Drive, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine, Package Sales Only
- 5. T Booze, T. Williams, 703 Oak Street, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine, Liquor, Package Sales Only
- 6. Booze Outlet, R. Patel, 1930 Brunswick Hwy, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine, Liquor, Package Sales Only
- 7. The Vibe Events, R. Patel, 215 Knight Ave. Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine, Liquor, Consumption on Premises Only
- 8. Quick Mart, R. Patel, 800 Ossie Davis Pkwy, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine Package Sales Only
- 9. Woody's Top Putt, J. Woods, 538 Plant Ave, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine Consumption on Premises

10. Torero Too Mexican, LLC, K. Miravete, 247 Memorial Drive, Waycross Ga. Beer and Liquor Consumption on Premises.
11. Waycross Food and Beverage, 1302 Brunel Street, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine Package Sales Only  
Cheers Liquor Store, S. Shah, 508 City Blvd, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine and Liquor, Package Sales Only
12. Kroger's, W. Tompkins, 1606 Memorial Dr. Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine Package Sales Only
13. LL Creek, L. Boykin, 421 Memorial Dr. Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine and Liquor, Consumption On Premises.
14. Crossway, A. Patel, 385 Ossie Davis Pkwy, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine Package Sales Only.
15. Fuji Bar and Grill, T. Cavanaro, 2201 Memorial Drive, Waycross Ga., Beer, Wine and Liquor, Consumption on Premises.
16. Rodeo Mexican Restaurant, L. Escalera, 2020 Memorial Drive, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine and Liquor, Consumption on Premises Only
17. Olive Garden, K. Smith, 2497 Memorial Drive, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine and Liquor, Consumption on Premises Only
18. King Claw, Y. Fu, 1803 Knight Ave, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine and Liquor, Consumption on Premises Only
19. Stop N Save, V. Patel, 500 Memorial Drive, Waycross Ga. Beer, Wine Package Sales Only
20. Family Dollar #20694, C. Dale, 578 Ossie Davis Pkwy, Waycross Ga. Beer and Wine, Package Sales Only
21. Thai Smile, C. Seanmantri, 314 Pendleton Street, Waycross Ga. Beer and Wine Consumption on Premises Only.
22. Shell City, R. Patel, 507 S. City Blvd, Waycross Ga. Beer and Wine, Package Sales Only.

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

**E. Proposed Ordinances:**

1. An Ordinance to Close and Abandon A Portion of Palm Beach Avenue Right-Of-Way West Of the Intersection of Palm Beach Avenue and Marion Street; To Authorize Quitclaim Deeds to Adjoining Property Owners For The Abandoned Right-Of-Way; To Establish An Effective Date; To Repeal Conflicting Ordinances; and for Other Purposes.

**F. Proposed Resolutions: n/a**

**G. City Attorney Report:**

**H. City Managers Report:**

**I. Last Call**

**J. Adjourn to Executive Session**

There was a motion made by Mayor Pro Temp, Alvin Nelson to go into executive session for the purpose of personnel. Seconded by Commissioner Hopkins. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned to go into executive session at 8:11pm

**K. Adjournment**

**CITY OF WAYCROSS**

**BY:**

*Michael Angelo James*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**MICHAEL-ANGELO JAMES, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

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



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**MAYOR:** At this time, we'll listen to our travel and training, and I will turn the remainder over to our City Manager.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. At this time, we do have some changes scheduled. We have eggs and Issue scheduled for January 13th and the 14th. That's Atlanta, Georgia. We also have the GMA Summit for January 20th 4 to 27. Also In Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Mayor, I'm going to start doing is making sure we put these on the schedule a minimum of two weeks out and we'll leave it on the agenda moving forward until we come back with those changes.

**MAYOR:** Okay. And just a quick question regarding travel and training, especially with these. Will we be like this? This will be going as a convoy going together. How are we going to do these things?

**CITY MANAGER:** Right now, we're trying to get one vehicle. Um, the one the, um, one of the city cars is not far right now, so we're trying to get one vehicle to kind of save on gas going up there. I know some, um, some of these missions will be leaving at other locations, so they might not be able to take their own vehicles at that time. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you.

**FELDER:** I have a question. Yes, sir. Um, this is to you Mr. City Manager And Finance director regarding travel and training. On numerous occasions I have submitted a written request and verbal request regarding my travel and training budget and expenses for FY 22 and FY 23 and FY 24 and at FY 25. And I have yet to receive a response. We continuously point out that I am over my traveling training budget. And so, my question is how am I being prepared for traveling and training when I don't know what my past or current budget is? And the documentation hasn't been provided for me, but you do have a schedule for the agent issues and getting ready to go to the United Center.

**CITY MANAGER:** Mr. Mayor. Commissioner. Commissioner who did you send that to?

**FELDER:** I sent to you, to the city attorney and financial director. I included you all at the email. Yes, numerous times I've asked for this.

**CITY MANAGER:** So, you said to the city attorney, and you said it to the city finance director.

**FELDER:** I will forward the email to you. Thank you. That would be very helpful.

**CITY MANAGER:** Great.

**FELDER:** Thank you for that. Thank you. Back to you Mr. Mayor.

**MAYOR:** Mr. City Manager.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Mr. Mayor, before I move into the actual Planning Commission session, I want to set the premise for our slides tonight so everybody can understand the direction where going in. And none of this is new but I felt, um, this was the moment to talk about it. Based off the last meeting, where the commission body got a view of Sweat Street, and you understand, the dire Sweat Street is in. I've often briefed about the requirement for us to somehow figure out to start increasing revenue for the city. We have yet to make any decisions on that. I've also discussed our workforce. We're having a hard time to retain talent and sustain talent. As you all know, we have many retirements put in, this past month and we've lost some of our police and other critical workforce, uh, to other jobs. So, as you move forward, and I would like the public to know, too. I just think, we all have to be aware of how, you know, how sensitive, how critical we are right now for infrastructure construction right now, because a lot of these slides, when we're talking about infrastructure, um, using Sweat Street as an example, I know that this will cost us \$500,000. Um, we

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all know based on the past, as soon as we open it all the way up, it probably goes to \$1 million. That's just one street, one sewer location. All our pipes are failing at this time. And they're failing drastically. And just being honest, and I say this many times before, we cannot keep up with the revenue coming in. Um, and this is not a problem that started when Mr. Rayford got here. This has been a problem for decades, and no one has addressed it. So, I want to say tonight we have to start addressing it and not making a decision is making the decision. And we can continue to hope that somehow these things will start repairing themselves. But they're not. So, when I say these things, I'm talking about the infrastructure as far as the roads, the sewer, water plants, um, all these things. They are drastically, overused. And like I said, we just, you know, for whatever reason, we haven't made a decision. I want to make that preface because we go on tonight. I know often, we get in here and we don't decide not to vote on things. And we are. We are one critical failure away from total disaster. And when we get to certain charts, especially the utilization chart for the water and sewer rates, when I've been asking to increase those rates, you know, we're bringing in \$7 million. And I just said to you, like, first week, \$1 million by itself, that's \$7 million, only covers the maintenance. And sometimes it's the maintenance. It doesn't cover any new any new projects at all. And that's, uh, new project, meaning our capital gains products. Y'all all know the cost of those and why we can't make any headway on those things. What I don't want to happen, and I hope you perfectly understand this is one day we're like, we're going to have multiple issues, and then we're going to be forced to raise stuff and not incrementally in small chunks. It's going to be large and everybody's going to pay for it. So I know city managers before me have brought this up to the commission body. I'm bringing up this time again, and I'm going to bring it up because I feel like we have to do something. We can't just be the messenger. It can't be anything else. It can't be emotional. This is this is something that has to be done. Uh, the same thing I work for. I will admit, I am walking a thin line with some of the advancements to the salaries. Um, but we have just not kept up with the rest of the cities. Um. And I don't want to lose anybody else. Um, for a few dollars, we can make that. You know, we can make those amounts up as best we can. Um, we have incorporated a lot of additional initiatives to keep people here. You know, to flex schedules, public works, you know, fulfilling their duties by Friday and leaving early. I mean, not in the sun, all those things, but it's still not keeping people in place. So, I'm just asking the commission to really consider these things moving forward. Um, you know, for eight months, we stood still, and we did nothing. And it really hurt the workforce. And I've said that numerous times, too, about their morale. So, I'm asking again as we go through these slides, if you can find your heart, you know, kind of consider what's going on to the workforce and what's going on to the city and just start figuring out how to fix these things. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Mr. mayor, next we'll go into the bids. I'm going to start with Miss Jackson, and she will be talking about the Scout lake and repairs to the warehouse, which was damaged greatly in that flash flood.

**MAMIE:** Mr. mayor, commissioners, the first item I have before you are the request to surplus a North Augusta Avenue, also known as Scout Lake. It is approximately 36.29 acres located on northwest Augusta Avenue. Um, this property has been in our possession for 100 years at this point, and we are asking that the city move forward with this surplus so that we can, um, get this listed on Gateway Realty so that we can add to our revenue. And if the city attorney allowed me to speak to this or. Okay. Um, recently, just before the meeting started, the city attorney gave me a document showing that this property actually was surplus back in 1998. Um, it was surplus when Mayor John Knox was in office. Um, I can give you the list of the, um, commissioners on board at that time. But this property actually was surplus back in 1998. So, the question now is, I guess, well, that would assume would need to go into executive session to ask for a listing price or discuss a listing price.

**MAYOR:** Miss Jackson, did you say 1990, 1998? That would have been Mayor Robert Odom's. Was it Robert Odum. Mayor Know was 1988 to 92 and then back to 15 to 2019. Okay, so it would have been over these number 63.

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**MAMIE:** This is this is an ordinance from this ordinance number 98-36. Yeah. It's ordinance number 98, 36, where this property was actually listed as surplus. And the date on the resolution. I'm sorry. The ordinance is December 8th, 1998. So, it's already actually declared surplus.

**MAYOR:** Okay. So, it's already declared surplus?

**MAMIE:** Yes.

**MAYOR:** Okay. Thank you.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Mr. mayor, if I could help her out a little bit. This is part of the history that Mr. Curry researched on April the 18th, 2018. And a part of that, he sent out a memo to the mayor and commissioners. And there's an ordinance dated. December 18th, 1998. And the signature, I guess you misread the signature. Um, it's a script scribbly signature. So, I guess it was, uh, Robert Odom's signature. Anyway, it was an ordinance to officially close a tract of land for use as a park. Which tract of land purchased by the city of Waycross in 1925 for use as a park pursuant to code section and other provisions of law. And anyway, the ordinance Effectively closed. Scout Lake as a park, and the other part of the ordinance was that it declared it as surplus property in section three of this particular ordinance. That's what she was referring to. And if I can let me just add, Commissioner Hopkins had asked at the last meeting something about the what the what the. There was a lease agreement with Okefenokee Heritage Center and Resa, and part of this research shows that this property was leased when that Scout Lake, Scout Lake was on the west side, on the east side. There was a lease agreement entered into between the City of Waycross and Okefenokee Regional Educational Service Agency on November 7th, 2017, to lease this property for a period of 20 years in 2017, and it also provided that Resa could sublease the property to Okefenokee Heritage Center. And so the term of the lease is for a period of 20 years. And the cost of \$1 per year. And Resa is responsible for maintaining liability insurance and one of \$1 million. It is also responsible for all maintenance repairs. The city has no liability whatsoever regarding the maintenance and upkeep of this property. Or and there is an indemnity clause that the city would be indemnified if there were any injuries occurring to any persons or property on that on those premises. But that's the that's the heritage Center. Resa center on the on the east side, on the west side is the Scout Lake property which is separate. Right. Now, I just wanted to answer Commissioner Hopkins questions about the property being leased. Commissioner Hawkins.

**HOPKINS:** Okay, so how many acres of land did we lease from too from RESA here? Just from the Heritage Center.

**MAMIE:** 26 acres, I. Believe.

**HOPKINS:** How much? About 26. 26 acres.

**MAMIE:** Yes, ma'am.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Okay. Scott Lake parcel is 36, I think.

**MAMIE:** 36? I believe that the total both parcels together are either 65- or 66-acres total. And the Scout Lake side is 36.20 29, I believe.

**HOPKINS:** Okay, let's clarify that. So I know so it's how many acres for RESA?

**MAMIE:** It's a little over 26 I 26. I don't have that exact one. I can get it for you right quick 26. The total parcel, both parcels together, are 65.65 acres. And the part, the portion that Scout Lake is considered is 36.29. So, if you subtract those two numbers, that is the other parcel.



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**HOPKINS:** Okay. And that leaves us through when?

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** 2037.

**HOPKINS:** I have one of the questions for the city manager. We talked about this. There's a lot of hardwood and a lot of pines that if the people's going to develop it, it'll be no good for them anyway. So, I suggest one more time for revenue for the city. And we're running short, as you just said on infrastructure. I would like to see us get a bid for the timber cruising on that to cruise some of that timber and sell it prior to selling the land, because if they're going to develop it, they're going to throw that that wood away anyway. There's a lot of fat out of wood on there and pine trees, so that we're just losing revenue by not doing that.

**CITY MANAGER:** We will execute that.

**HOPKINS:** Pardon?

**CITY MANAGER:** We will execute that. We will find a contract for the wood.

**HOPKINS:** Don't ask me.

**CITY MANAGER:** We will execute that. We will finance the contract.

**HOPKINS:** I can't understand you sometimes. I don't know what you said. Okay.

**HOPKINS:** We'll do that. Okay.

**NELSON:** Mr. mayor.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner.

**NELSON:** Yes, Um, well, my opinion would be that that land would be more attractive if you offer that someone with that timber on it because they could sell it. I mean, there's no there's no shortage of people trying to buy timber, so we could add that to the cost.

**CITY MANAGER:** I mean, I'm open to what the commission wants to do. I just I just feel like we need to return this to the tax register. We have multiple people trying to buy that land for many years now. Um, we asked them to come in this week wanting to buy it. So, I just think it's time to, you know, so the commission wants to proceed with the timber without timber. I just want to get a concession to go ahead and put it up for sale and then get a price, and then put it to the. Market.

**MAYOR:** For more people to move forward. We have two commissioners who have made comments regarding the timber on the land. And we'll find a consent in whichever we consider three. Then we can move forward with that. Commissioner Nelson, were you finished? Yes, sir. Okay.

**HOPKINS:** Commissioner Hopkins. Um, well. And it appears there's a lot of timber companies that would come and assess it and appraise it. We don't know how much it's worth. So, if we're going to sell it to the timber, we ought to at least know how much that timber is worth to add to the price.

**MAMIE:** Um, if I may, Commissioner, that assessment was done once before, back in 2008. I don't know what became of it, but I did find a record that there was an assessment of it, and it was valued in 2008 at \$36,000. The timber.

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**HOPKINS:** In 2008. That's a long time ago, right? So, I'm sure the number has increased because you could buy plywood sandwiches right now. So, I know there's a demand for timber and that's my suggestion, is that if we want to sell it to the sandbox, we need to just give an appraisal a walk through, at least the ones that seem to be sitting in.

**MAYOR:** That commission just for a moment. Someone's phone is going off. If you will, those who are in the gallery, if you will turn off your phones or put them on silent or vibrate, because we're having difficulty hearing up here already with just regular sounds. Okay. Thank you.

**NELSON:** Mr. Mayor, may I say something, please?

**MAYOR:** Commissioner Nelson,

**NELSON:** Thank you, sir. So, if it's. In 2008. It's valued at 36 K. On cost of inflation. I'd say we had. 30 or 40% to. That and then take it to the cost. Of the land.

**MAYOR:** Thank you.

**MAMIE:** Okay. Miss Mamie? The next item before the commission is a request to repair.

**MAYOR:** Just for a moment. Commissioner Hopkins has another statement.

**HOPKINS:** That timber. You just add 34%. That's not much. I would like to see us get a current value, and they'll do it for nothing. They'll go out and look at it and tell you how much they can assess it, and approximately how much it is this day and time. That's been a long time. And then we can decide then, if we want to up the price, just to say a full enough percentage out there is not going to work, because that's been a long time ago. So, I'd still like to see one of the timber companies come out and the city manager go with them out there and get a rough estimate price of how much this timber would be worth today if we sold it. And then we can go from there to know how much to mark it up another day, because we hadn't had any we hadn't had any appraisals done on that land. Is that correct?

**MAMIE:** On the land? Yes, ma'am. There has been an appraisal done.

**HOPKINS:** Okay. How much was it?

**MAMIE:** Um, did you want to discuss that in executive session or.

**MAYOR:** We were supposed to discuss in executive. Okay. Yeah.

**MAMIE:** The cost of the land. We'll discuss. Um, if the city manager would make a request for executive session, I would gladly give you that cost. That. I'm sorry. The estimation. Okay.

**HOPKINS:** That's fine. Thank you. Sir.

**MAYOR:** Okay. We can move forward.

**MAMIE:** The next item purchasing has before the commission. On November 11th, there was a flash flooding due to heavy rain here in the city, and our warehouse on Alice Street was affected. If you look in your packets, um, I tried to screenshot as many photos as I could. Um, the warehouse sustained at least 14in of water. Standing water. And because of that, there were several things damaged. Um, overall, we lost a little over \$7,000 of inventory. And our inventory, that warehouse supplies the city as well as ESG for their water works. Um, in addition to that, uh, there are two offices in that warehouse and two bathrooms. Everything in there had mold growing on it. Um, we got Servpro out to come and clean and sanitize the building at the cost of \$4,595.16. After that was done, we had to throw away a

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lot of the inventory because mold was affecting the desk and chairs and office furniture and counter and the break room and, um, we have wooden shelves in the warehouse were all affected, and they had mold growing on them. So, we had to throw all of that away. And I also provided a spreadsheet of the total losses that we had, as well as what it would cost and materials to get everything replaced with the exception of the sheetrock and the flooring. Um, the total loss from inventory and office furniture. Warehouse shelves and aisles and counters was. And the cost of to clean and sanitize came to a total of 19,865.39. And the cost to actually just replace the materials, the desks, the chairs of electrical sockets, wiring, um, came up to a little over 5000 and an estimate that's not including the sheetrock and the flooring. We are asking and I spoke to a couple of people, including our facilities person, to get just a rough cost of what it would cost for labor to replace everything in there, um, because sheetrock and everything will have to be replaced. The sinks, the toilets, the counter, the water heater for that, for that warehouse, um, the air conditioning units that are there, uh, it's going to be roughly about 25 to \$30,000 to have all of that repaired in place. And we're asking the commission that they grant us that so we can get this warehouse up and running, because right now, our warehouse coordinator is downstairs in the basement in our mini warehouse, um, still trying to do the work that he would do in the warehouse.

**HOPKINS:** Do we have, um, Mr. Mayor. Do we have, um, an insurance claim on that?

**MAMIE:** The insurance? We do not have the insurance plan out yet, but we would have to at least pay our deductible. We would have to meet our deductible before April 1st, which is 10,000.

**HOPKINS:** 10,000 so were in the whole ten thousand at least.

**MAMIE:** Yes, ma'am. Either way it goes, we're going to have to pay.

**HOPKINS:** That claim to come in and pay for any of that, Mr. Mayor.

**CITY MANAGER:** No, Commissioner.

**HOPKINS:** They won't?

**CITY MANAGER:** No Commissioner.

**MAYOR:** We're also in a situation where now any buildings that have had flooding, if they don't have flood insurance, that's going to be a problem. So, you may have insurance on the building, insurance on content, but if it floods, then that's a whole different. Area that we don't have that problem.

**HOPKINS:** Every time I at my beach house, I would ask what and when and then all of those types. So, we have all. That now the flood insurance policy.

**MAYOR:** Consideration. But beforehand we've not had these kinds of events that we're having most recently.

**HOPKINS:** So that's always there. And I know it can run. Back in that basement period where it's built.

**MAYOR:** So, you just need a consent.

**MAMIE:** A consent to put out a bid to have the repairs and renovations done.

**MAYOR:** So, I'm going to just I'll hold the positions and I'll start with district one. Thank you. Thank you. I just need to know whether or not I'm going to allow for. An appraisal to be done if I'm not

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mistaken. Yes. Okay. District two. Yes, sir. Mr. Yes. Mr. Yes. District five. Yes, sir. you have consent. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Jackson. Uh, next, Mr. mayor, we're moving to the discussion items. Uh, starting with finance update for the for the public to see. Are you aware of. You know, we have December 31st, uh, to obligate all of our funds. We don't have to spend those funds until the end of 2026. So right now, the remaining operating funds will be unobligated. Funds we have is about 200,000. Um, what I'd like to do is use these monies for the fire department expenses. Um, we had some issues with some of the trucks. Um, they require immediate fixing, and that costs around about \$25,000. Um, Street highway maintenance expenses. As you know, we're upgrading some of our stop signs and other common devices to slow people down right now. Um, this is where we're doing some other corrections to the streets. Um, that we can do service level, uh, as well as do some additional striping to those locations and striping. Um, the next phase will be the warehouse repair. Um, I went ahead and budget that in at \$30,000. Um, God's word is only. Praise him. I had to go ahead and get that funding. Um, and then scan the contract. As you know, we have never really scanned all our documents in. Um, so we're really behind on that. Um, that scanning contract is around about \$25,000 as well. Um, but what they would do, they would come and scan all of our paperwork, all ours. All our designs. All our maps. All our historical information into the database system. Which it should have been done already. So, by doing this, we'll complete that task as well. Um, and then finally, its part prepared. Um, I'm trying to figure out how much that would mean. Um, we did have, uh, some of the parts taken major damage, and we could not use, uh, FEMA for insurance to cover those areas. Um, so what I would like to do is at least go ahead and create some of this money towards that. Um, we have more money coming in with the slots, which I'll cover later on for the parks. So, over the next year, we should be able to get the parks back up to the standards it was before the storm came in, but it might take some time. So, um, that's why we have to do with the Arpa funding. And I'm just asking for consistency from the commission.

**MAYOR:** Okay. Commissioners, our city manager is requesting consensus for the offer fund update as presented on the screen. District one question. I'll do the polling, but. I think Mr. Boyd. Mr. Two. Yes, sir. Mr. Three. Five. second. District four. How do you want to know more about that? Okay. And district five Yes, sir. So, you have three consenting. Two want more information. The question. Commissioner Felder has a question, and it may answer. Commissioner Hopkins question.

**FELDER:** Thank you. Mayor. My question is pertaining to parks repair. I noticed that previously with Arpa funds, some of those funds were used for. I don't know if it was park repairs or equipment over in district one. And I. Don't recall as a commission ever voted to legalize Arpa funds to replace certain. Equipment in that park in that particular district. There was a list that was provided and provided to me with Arpa funds that were used for that park, and I have several parks that I've made requests for repairs and also added equipment, and that hasn't happened. And I know that I have not spent very. Much of my park funds all my parks in my district.

**FELDER:** So, my question is how? How? How will that happen? Because I just wasn't aware when I saw that on the list. It just took me by surprise.

**CITY MANAGER:** I might go back to the commissioner. I can't tell you. I mean, I'm not sure what you're referring to, but at the time, I'll go back and check. Right now, I'm just trying to play the stuff that you cannot cover. So, some of those, um. I think, um, there are certain things we'll never get back right now. And we do have funding right here you do to make those prayers and those things was, um, you know, well used by the public. So, I took on that mission.

**FELDER:** Probably also. Um, what about the interest that was going. On from ARPA.

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**CITY MANAGER:** I went away? I already mentioned it before. Um, did you know we'd be paying the outside to do the flooring and clean the carpet? We're upgrading. We're going to fix our some of our windows. Not all the windows, but some of the windows and some other structural stuff around City Hall. How much is that? It's going to come to about 8000 once it's done.

**HOPKINS:** Okay. 80,000. Once it's done.

**FELDER:** Not 60.

**CITY MANAGER:** You got \$82,002 contracts. I don't have the quotes for the windows yet. That's going to be quite expensive. That's going to probably finish off the money once they give us the bids for the windows.

**FELDER:** Yes. Previously when you mentioned this about the HK. 82K interest that we earn from our state and that that would be used to do the painting and be the maintenance and. Rehabilitation of City Hall. But then also, if I recall correctly, you stated that. 20 of the 82 was used to purchase the Christmas toys. Yes, that's why I asked. So that's one out of 62.

**CITY MANAGER:** Correct? Yes. I say, once I get the window, of course that's going to take. The rest of the money is going to be quite expensive. I want to get all the windows. For just a few of the windows.

**FELDER:** Thank you. Thank you.

**MAYOR:** Any other questions, Commissioner?

**HOPKINS:** Was that the 80,000 that you that you made interest off because \$80,000 interest of that money. Am I my life. \$82,000, correct.

**CITY MANAGER:** 82. Correct. So that 82. Will we spend that whole amount on this building?

**CITY MANAGER:** We will in the end, yes. Correct. Okay.

**HOPKINS:** When does the cleaning. Cleaning the carpet. They said we wouldn't have enough to replace it, that we.

**Speaker 7:** Were going to keep the floors outside. But we got the carpet cleaned this weekend and we got some of the painting done already. The rest will be for repairs around the building. Okay. And that's all of it.

**HOPKINS:** So, the flooring will stay. Am I right?

**CITY MANAGER:** We will replace the flooring I had in front because it's been replaced. All that and that'll be done sometime early next year.

**HOPKINS:** So that's just carpet stuff.

**CITY MANAGER:** Right? Correct. Okay, that sounds good. Okay.

**MAYOR:** All right, so I'll go back to Commissioner Felder And Hopkins, and we just need to need a consent to move forward with the ARPA. Commissioner Felder, I abstain, and Commissioner Hopkins, I would like to say that this lack of what we spent so far from my decision. Thank you. We have three consensuses. Okay.

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**CITY MANAGER:** Next, Mr. mayor, we move into the activities conversion study results, and I breakfast before, um, after this, um, numerous times already. I just want to read it to the commission. Um, right now, what we have coming in is not even what we get going out. And like I said, we are a few disasters away from really having issues with our infrastructure. Um, I've tried to present a strategy where we do increments and raising, um, and I'm not sure if we're going to be able to do that after the next couple of years. uh, have a concern about the state of us of our utilities right now. So, I'm just going to do I'm going to bring up the city engineer, and he's going to kind of discuss. Uh, the conversion study. Um, you'll see one part on there where we initially briefed the 3% increase. And I think that will bring us around 250,000 to maybe 250,000 if we use some matching money for grants and loans. Uh, if you got a little more aggressive than with the 5%, I think it would take us around \$700,000, which gives us even more capital to kind of address those capital gains projects. Um, this is like a very important decision. Uh, like I said, we've discussed this numerous times already. Uh, I think that the citizens kind of understand the plight that we're in right now. Um, I know people often complain about the leaks. Um, and the leaks and the potholes, all those things. Those are just a small snapshot of what's actually going on the ground. Um, which is a much, much bigger problem. Like I said, it is not being addressed properly. For decades now, I am attempting to address it properly at this time. Um, also, when we're doing the conversion study and the results of the study. Um, like I said, we'll be converting. Um, well, we'll be inverting the rates like right now in the commercial, they use more water, but they pay less. It should be the other way around with the residential, with the residents, you know, pay less. Um, trying to get back to that, to that equation and like I said, and then create an additional revenue stream coming in that allows us to start tackling all these projects that we can't tackle right now. I'm going to pause there and let, um, this engineering firm come up. Charlie Bridges and explain further.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Okay. Good evening, Commissioners Um, so I'm going to go. Back over a Presentation that I've done a couple of different times and, and just kind of let you. Guys ask questions about. Maybe things that are not very clear. Um, if you'll recall, we did a capital improvement plan specifically for water and sewer. Infrastructure. Improvements about year 2020. And we tackled a few of those items, specifically out at the wastewater plant that works being done. Um, but we've still got a lot to do. Roughly \$19 million left in infrastructure. And that's not. Everything. That's just some of the most critical. Things that we. We've identified. So far. And as a result, we went through and tried to create. A plan for us. To be able to fund. The most. Critical improvements that we assess, and we needed to make. And what we found is we went through the rates of the current water and sewer rates. We found that there is a significant imbalance between the residential and. Commercial rate structure. And really what that means is, and I'll. Have a Graph in Here in just a little bit that you guys have seen before. It'll kind of illustrate it, but what it means is that the commercial customers, which use the majority of the water, are not paying their fair share. And that means that doesn't mean that they're from a dollar perspective. They're not paying more than the residential customers because they use a lot more. And therefore, they pay more, but they it's not proportional. And I think that will make a little more sense as I go through. And if you guys have

questions, just stop me as I go. But here's the chart that that I was, I was talking about and what you see is the revenue is in white and the usage is in green, and usage is what the rates are. The, the dollar amounts that we pay, the revenue is based on. And so, you'll see that the residential customers proportionally use less than the commercial customers, yet they pay more. And so, part of what we want to do, not only do we want to create a structure where we can fund our capital improvement plan, but we also want to make this adjustment as we go. And what we did was we tried to make it the least impactful we could to the residential customer and to a certain extent, to the residential, I mean, to the commercial customer. But we needed to get that proportion back to them. And so, this is just an example of the commercial classes of, of for water rates. We do it by meter size. And so, you'll see by meter size um we're recommending a 3% increase. Um, and that equates to \$1 for the two-inch meter, \$1 and 11 cent increase for an average bill in the second year would be \$1.13. In the third year it would be \$1.18 and so forth on down the line. And then here's where the adjustment comes in. Um, and it is you can see up there I know it's hard to read, but it's a 7%. It's, it's called out as a 7% increase. Really, it's a 7% adjustment to get them proportional. And then we would go back through and do the 3% increase over

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the entire population, which would be commercial and residential. And then the residential customers similarly would show this has got water and sewer rates together, but it would show a very minute overall increase of 3% and \$0.69, \$0.71, \$0.74 over the next three years, which is a total of \$2.14 per customer for water and then \$3.55 per year at the end of that three years for sewer. And what this 3% increase would do was it would allow us to generate an additional \$250,000 a year. And the plan there would be that would be to fund debt service. It would take us a while to accumulate enough funds to do a capital improvement project, accumulating \$250,000 a year. So, what we've done for you guys in the past is we've gotten loans, and that would be the plan here and the benefit to a loan. In the past, we've been able to get 50% principal forgiveness for y'all. And what that means is we can borrow twice as much money because we only have to pay half of that money back. And so that's the, um, that's really the point to be made. The capital you got for, for you guys who were here at the last meeting, you saw the video of Sweat Street that we took where we've got water and sand continually pouring into our sewer lines. And that's just an example of what's going on all over all over the city. So, they're needed. It's not stuff that we want to do. It's stuff that we really have to do. And then, like I said, as we went through the rates, we found that the commercial, um, the commercial customers needed a rate adjustment and the, the, the overall recommendation to fund our capital improvement plan. The most critical items on it is a 3% increase for commercial and residential over the next three years. Um, and at the suggestion of the city manager, I went through and did some real quick calculations on what a 5% increase would be. Just to give you guys the example. And so over year one, for a residential customer, it would be one dollar and \$0.15. Uh, year two would be \$1.22. Year three would be \$26 and 70. I mean, I'm sorry, \$1.27, which is a total increase of \$3.64 over the next three years. Um, at 3%, we generate \$250,000 a year in additional revenue to fund these capital improvements. If we went to 5%, it would generate an additional \$350,000 a year for debt service. Um, does anybody have any questions?

**MAYOR:** Commission district one. Question. No, sir. District two. No, sir. District three. No. District four.

**HOPKINS:** Um, does this include the cost to repair the lift stations as well?

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. It does. What we did is. And we're in the process now of doing a conditions assessment. Um, over the entire system. This capital plan was done back in 2020, and it included, uh, water and sewer infrastructure, including the water plant, wastewater plant and all the lift stations, as well as water and sewer, the distribution lines and collection lines.

**HOPKINS:** And what this the this increased the water bill. And I see your numbers that will take it up to five years doing an increase every year. Ma'am. Well, when we go up to five years increase every year.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** The idea would be. Yes, ma'am, over five years. And what we would. The idea would be, is we would submit a loan application and see what our principal forgiveness came back as, and that would allow us to go back and reassess how much we can borrow for this same rate increase. Does that make sense?

**HOPKINS:** It does. I just wanted to say we'll start out with a little bit and a little more and a little more.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** That's right Yes, ma'am.

**HOPKINS:** To that. Percentage.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Correct? Yes, ma'am.

**HOPKINS:** And the max? That will be how much per household customer?

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**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** It would be. 3% over the next three years would be 355 per customer if you total all that up. So, if you go out to five years, it would be roughly probably around \$4 total. Not each, not \$4 each year, but incrementally totaled at the end would be roughly around \$4.

**HOPKINS:** Over a five-year period.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Five years? Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry.

**HOPKINS:** Okay. That's what I need to know. And Now the, um, on the commercial side, it will go up approximately how much per customer because I know they use a lot more than residential.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** They do. And the commercial is a little tricky because we have a most residential customers have a three-quarter inch meter, so it's really easy to compare those across the board. Commercial is a little bit different. As you can see, we have two-inch meters all the way down to eight-inch meters. I know it's hard to read, but like for an eight-inch meter, which would be kind of the worst-case scenario. This and this are an average bill. So, you know, this is not for every single customer, but for an average customer with an eight-inch meter, their increase in year three would be \$268 a month. And that's with the adjustment and the increase. In their current. Just to keep it in proportion. And their current bill average bill is \$2,216.

**HOPKINS:** Okay, so it's completely raised a good bit compared to the residential commercial sewer.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Is going to be the biggest adjustment? Yes, ma'am. They'll get a commercial will get a 3% increase on their water rates just like the residential customers. Those water rates are proportional. The sewer rates are not. And so they'll get that 7% plus the 3%. So overall it's roughly 7% adjustment 3% increase.

**HOPKINS:** That's a total of five years to the well right. That's right. Yes ma'am. Okay. So basically, it's only going to hurt the residential customers about \$4 total after the past five years okay. And that will generate how much money. Three.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Uh, that's \$250,000 a year. Okay. The idea being that towards debt service, uh, so to pay back a loan.

**HOPKINS:** That we did we did a study, a rate study one time coming out of Florida. And he was the treasurer, and we didn't ever pass it. So, and it sounds like to me that it's not going to be that big of a deal, \$4 over a total of five years. That was.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** The idea. And we won't be able to get the whole \$19 million capital plan done with this. But the highest priority, the failures will get done first, and then we'll reassess at the end of that five years.

**HOPKINS:** Okay, because I know we've had one cave in in my district, couldn't flush the toilets or anything, and that one cave in is emergency deal. That's right. That was over \$50,000.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** And the problem with emergencies is they always are more expensive than if you if you deal with it ahead of time. Right. And that's what we're trying to do is get ahead of some of this.



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**HOPKINS:** So basically, it will be just about city wide for this and the improvements.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Yes, ma'am. Yes, it will be based on priority. And so, we will the highest priority, the wet streets, the Ossie Davis's, those kind of those kind of deals will be the step one will be to go through and do, uh, inspections, camera inspections of the sewer lines and in areas where we know we have issues. And then the exact project from there will be designed and built out.

**HOPKINS:** Okay. I know we have a lot of old terracotta pipes and back in the 50s, and I have a lot of those in my neighborhood. I'm sure everybody else does too. Those numbers have to be priority because they like to cave in at any time.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** The, the terracotta lines are the ones that we have the most problems with. And we actually have terracotta sewer lines. We also have terracotta A storm drain lines a different issue. I don't want to confuse everybody. That storm's a different animal. This is water. Sewer.

**HOPKINS:** But I just know we've had cave ins because it was terra cotta pipe. And. Yes, ma'am, it just failed. Correct. And it cost a lot of money. When you have to do an emergency, we naturally bid it higher.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Exactly right.

**HOPKINS:** Yes. That's all the questions I have, Mr. Mayor.

**MAYOR:** Thank you. Commissioner. Commissioner Nelson. No, sir.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, Mr. Mayor, he covered both the 3% and the 5%, and the 3% was being moderate, the 5% being a little aggressive. Like I said, we just can't keep up with all this stuff anymore. And this will give us a little bit of breathing room. We still have issues because like there's so much to do at this time, but at least we can figure out, you know, some of those, those high priorities. Now there's some other items on here that will also increase revenue later at all. So hopefully those plus this can kind of impact that list a little bit more. So um, so I will be asking for a decision on this. Like I said, we briefed it 4 or 5 times now and we have moved forward tonight. Yes.

**MAYOR:** Yes. And you want it on the 3% or the five? No.

**CITY MANAGER:** I will leave it to the commission. Uh, you got both the numbers. Um, ideally, I would want it to be five. Um, we've kind of talked to the committee about this numerous times. Um,

through social media as well as face to face. I think they all understand where we are right now with this. And, you know, it's only going to get worse.

**MAYOR:** So, I'll start high and go, go. District one. And we're talking about 5%.

**ROBERTS:** Uh, sir. If, um. If you don't mind, I'm. I'm new to this. District one. So, uh, if you don't mind. Can you give me a chance to reach out to district one to see how they feel about this?

**MAYOR:** Yes. District two.

**BENNETT:** Um, yes. Let's do. Three.

**MAYOR:** 3%.

**MAYOR:** District three.

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**FELDER:** I abstain.

**HOPKINS:** District four. And he just gave us faces on 3.55 Mr. Mayor

**CITY MANAGER:** You're three and five. Commissioner.

**HOPKINS:** Three and five and three is going to be a lot less, because we really have some citizens out here to me, that are really suffering and hardly pay the water bill. So I can't go 5%. Okay, so 3%. 3%.

**MAYOR:** And district five.

**NELSON:** We're going to complicate everything. Um, I prefer three on the residential and 4 or 5 on the commercial. Well, based on their usage, they're the ones that are really hurting the sewer system.

**MAYOR:** Okay. So, with that said, I just want to make sure I'm hearing correctly. We have three that are agreeing with 3% for residential. And then there's a presentation now for 5% on the commercial. Yes. Okay. And I'll go back to district I know district one wants to do some investigating.

**ROBERTS:** Yes, sir. I agree with I understand we got maintenance to do, but we do have people that are having problems with the water bill right now. So I would just like to reach out to them.

**MAYOR:** Understood. On the commercial side, would we agree for the 5%. And that's not for the residential that would be in the business.

**ROBERTS:** I would just like to wait all the way around.

**BENNETT:** Okay. Very good. And two. Yes. Two. Yes. Disagree.

**FELDER:** And this is for the commercial? Nay

**MAYOR:** Okay. And four?

**HOPKINS:** What was that?

**MAYOR:** 5% on the Commercial.

**HOPKINS:** I can't do that 5%.

**MAYOR:** What about 3%? About 3% On commercial.

**Speaker 3:** Thank you. Yes.

**Speaker 4:** So, with that, you get three points for residential.

**MAYOR:** I have three votes on residential and I need three on commercial.

**FELDER:** So, my question was are we open for discussion?

**MAYOR:** You can ask questions. Okay.

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**FELDER:** Um, so my question is if we're increasing rates and I'm reflecting back on what you said earlier, um, Mr. City Manager, we're increasing these rates to bring us, uh, I guess, to make us balanced with other rates that other cities are currently at.

**CITY MANAGER:** As you recall, we did the window. I did the first study. I tried to stay low, but, you know, when we got to the study, they kind of recommended, like we are very low rate wise compared to any other city. I know we like prepare ourselves for Douglas a lot of times. And as I mentioned before, they stay in line with the CPI model. Um, so their rates are way higher than ours. So, we are extremely low right now. Even with a 3 to 5 year. You're talking about \$0.15 extra on that dollar 15 already. So, it's not a big difference. And in my opinion, I appreciate the question Commissioner. But what's going to happen is this is going to break for real and the rates going up anyway. And they're going to go up extremely high to the citizens. And they're really going to be mad then, because we got a chance right now to take it slowly up and do what we can do over time versus next year when those two big pipes fail, and they raise double. So, I don't know how not come at you and kind of wait a minute, I don't know how to explain this because I don't want this to be next year. And everybody's wondering what happened. You know, when the bills go up, because we're not going to have a chance to debate it then, because we got to figure out how to how to pay for this stuff. So, as you remember, you recommended I get the study. And his recommendation was to go up 8% like to catch up with inflation because we have not, as Commissioner Hopkins said, we have not made any adjustment in at least 12 years. We've set still. And I keep saying about sitting still not doing anything, we better be doing something. So, um, you know, I don't know how else to present this. I just don't want me to go down the road. People ask why we do anything. So, tell them right now. We got a chance to do something right now.

**FELDER:** Thank you. You mentioned that you had a chance to do something right now by increasing these rates, but we don't know. What that looks like later on down the road. Once we if we vote on increasing these rates, then we get to three, four years, five years down the road. And then we have to increase these rates again.

**CITY MANAGER:** But we don't we do know that the infrastructure failing faster than we can replace the commissioner. We know that for sure because we know this every day. I'm bringing y'all different pipelines. So, we know that. And we do know doing a little bit right now, it will give us enough money to tackle some of the projects. Like I said, it's not going to fix everything, but I do have some ideas to bring other revenue in to address the rest of those projects. But like I say, we can keep on tabling this and keep on backpedaling from it, but eventually we're going to be forced to do something and that's going to that's going to really cost us. So, I'm just putting that out on the table.

**MAYOR:** Let me add to this, because If we had to declare an emergency. That puts me in a position of making a decision, if I'm not mistaken. Mr. City attorney? That's correct. So, while you have an opportunity to make a decision, it may be wise to go ahead and make it, because I know what I'm going to do if something breaks. Correct. So, it's up to you.

**CITY MANAGER:** And I'm like, you know, like trying to really work as a team on this. I just, you know, it's my short time here and like all this stuff just going bad and then like, you know, reaching back to all every other city manager, same thing. Don't do nothing. And like I said, I'm going to be the one on, you know, piloting the ship when it goes bad, you know, because it's going bad right now as we speak. It's going bad right now. And I hope everybody can appreciate it's not like a scare tactic, but this is a concern, you know, that we need to all be concerned about the state of our infrastructure, you know? I'm going to see.

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**MAYOR:** What we need to do. Then my question to the commission. We've already agreed. We have three to increase the residential to 3%. We are now looking at the increase of the rate of commercial. We do have one issue. Hopkins has already said yes, but the 3% of commercial.

**CITY MANAGER:** Mr. mayor. Yes, sir. Because even if you made these just. You couldn't make it to the next budget year. Yes. Um, and Commissioner Rob just said he's brand new to this. Um, I don't want to keep pushing down the road, but I think if we need to go back and talk to his constituents, everybody's going to do the same thing to explain this better than I can push it to January. But we really need to do something. I mean, I just don't, you know, we can't keep pushing the question.

**MAYOR:** Maybe we'll see where we are right now. We don't know specifically what you need to push forward at this point. We have known, Commissioner Hopkins at 3% for commercial and also, I believe, Commissioner. Bennett also, we need to get back with you. Okay. And, Commissioner, go. Okay.

**MAYOR:** So, we have 2 to 2 and one to abstain. Okay. And I have two others. In the same year as well. And Mr. Nelson says 5%. And Commissioner Bennett is also saying 5%, but I'm not sure. Commercial. Okay. Those are the commercial. When you say the only two. So, we still have a commissioner who's waiting on his information.

**CITY MANAGER:** Mr. Mayor if I can. The goal is to get the conversion back right side. So, three and three would not make the commercial pay, you know. Right. To just keep it the same? Pretty much. So.

**MAYOR:** No, I think I think every time you've done this slide over and over again and they changed the colors each time I know. You did change those. That was Patrick, Mr. Patrick. Okay. Well, I didn't notice the change. So, I'm thinking that you've done all you could to highlight the. Disparity between the two. So, we can see that it is. And the commercial. Is getting they're getting more usage and less to pay out. And the.

**CITY MANAGER:** Proposal was it was 7%. That Mr. Bridges presented to get us back right.

**HOPKINS:** I am saying three best to raise the commercial people \$227.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Yes, ma'am. Uh, \$268.14. That's just an example of that.

**CITY MANAGER:** But. 3% won't do that. That's the 7% figure. The Charlie presented So Charlie presented 7%.

**HOPKINS:** How much? The only thing I say is these people got to stay in business. You got to write themselves a check. You got to pay insurance that they rent. They already have a huge overhead. And I hate to see it. \$260 added to a water bill. And that really puts a damper on them with all the expenses because they don't get any work. They can't write them a check. They shut the doors. And that's the reason I say \$260 is a lot.

**MAYOR:** With that being said, because we only have two. Two. Yeah, and I don't normally refer to this as a division. And we have one who said, wait for a moment, so I'm going to wait. And it gives us opportunity when January comes and when that time comes. But I don't want to take this opportunity. But at this point it will be the January call, as you have mentioned to me, and that will give you time to make the decision.

**NELSON:** I have a question that that 200 and something per month increase is for what meter?

**CITY MANAGER:** That's a that's a large that's a large.

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**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** That's a, that's an eight-inch meter.

**CITY MANAGER:** Yes sir. That's a wall box. And you see.

**NELSON:** What I'm thinking is that the average business in Waycross has about a three-inch meter. Um. Like me, mine is three. Yes, sir. So? So, we all wouldn't see that increase.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** That's a that's the eight-inch meter is the largest meter that we have in our system.

**NELSON:** That's it. That's the big boys. That's the big. The big boys. Can't afford that. I'm sorry. He didn't go out of business.

**CITY MANAGER:** And like I say they're adversely affected when stuff break too. So they'll be paying more regardless in the end.

**MAYOR:** So, I mean you're all going to incur whatever damages that's going to take place. Once something breaks, we're going to we're going to all feel the pain of it. So just the idea of getting us to January, it's fine. We'll bring it up again. I don't know. Present presentation. But I believe that we will be able to decide when our district board has an opportunity to do that.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** And. Mr. mayor, let me just add one more thing. These are based on these are just examples of average usage for each meter size. So, this is not exactly what would happen to each person to build an eight. Meter for each. One. It's all based on usage. So, I'm just trying to give the commission an idea about how it would impact the commercial users and the residential. These are the types of examples. Yes, yes, it is.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Next, Mr. mayor, we'll move on to a fire department realignment. It's going to be led by Chief Evans. Outgoing Chief Evans, as I said, and we've discussed this a few times, the other forums, this is mainly for the new commissioner coming on board. So, to kind of be aware of our challenges with some of our pay grades in the fire department, but also concerned with morale in the fire department. So I'll turn it over to you

**CHIEF EDDINS:** Mayor and commissioners. As you are aware, the general public not. This will be my last time coming before you in a work session. As the. Fire chief of the Waycross Fire Department. On December the 24th, I will officially hang my helmet up. I decided to give my wife the best Christmas present ever. Me full time. She doesn't see it that way, but. That's the way I'm

packaged. And there's no returns and no refunds on that. So, she has to take it. Up just to catch maybe the commissioners that weren't here 3 or 4 months ago. I did make the mayor, commissioners, and the city manager aware of an anomaly that was happening in the fire department. The Waycross Fire Department is comprised of 54 members. That's myself, the chief. We have a report specialist. We have one fire marshal, three battalion chiefs, three captains, nine lieutenants, 18 drivers And 18 firefighters if we're fully staffed. We currently have three firefighters that are. In recruit class. They'll test on. December the 30th and successful. With that written test, they start riding the fire trucks. After December the 24th. However, we will have three openings. Again, we have a lieutenant and a battalion chief. That have retired. They will affect the. Shift work and we already had one opening. We are traditionally now hiring at least three times a year. We don't hire until we have three openings just based on how the class works. It's easier to have three people versus two we did two hire one time an individual quit during training, so that meant one instructor to one person that had to be miserable on both sides of that. That was made for some long days. So, three seems to be a number that works with. And someone decided that it wasn't for them. I at least got two people that can move through, because a lot of stuff that we train on is teamwork, not individual. When you work in the fire department, you work as a team. So, one person, one instructor did not bode well for our training. We got that individual

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through, but it was a struggle. I never wanted to put either side in that position again. What we found ourselves in the predicament, something that I'd never seen in my career, where we were not getting individuals that were moving towards the driver position from firefighter to driver. We had actually come up with through whatever means of leaving, whether it was retirement, somebody decided they wanted to take another career. I even mentioned that we had a captain, which was the fourth rank in our department, that had left to go to another department to be a firefighter and make more money per hour. It was something that you usually you get somebody to a driver position, especially the lieutenant. They're generally not going to leave unless they're going for a chief level officer job in another department. So, for whatever reason, we found ourselves with six driver openings. Then we had another battalion chief that had retired that made seven driver openings. I don't get rattled much when it comes to things like that, but that was something I had not seen, and I was not accustomed to. I had 37 years in the fire service. I tell folks jokingly, and some people actually would when promotions come up. As I was coming through the ranks, we would make anonymous phone calls if that's what it took and turn our parents. If that's what it took to get a promotion, it was competitive. People were striving to be in the next level. Something's changed in my career where that's not there anymore. We didn't look at the dollars, what we were going to get paid to go to the next level. But in today's world, they look at the dollars and we unfortunately aren't offering dollars were offering cents to go to the next level. So, I listed off the ranks. But we have two other paths that we use as a firefighter. I could be a bump up driver, which means I would drive in the absence of a driver. It'd be like a part time position. And we those that under our current system that would choose to go that route would only receive \$0.30 an hour. Remember, dollars versus cents from firefighter to driver is a whole different end of the spectrum. They still have to fight fire. They still have to maintain the minimum training, but now they have to drive that fire truck. When I come up, we drove bigger vehicles. The young kids today aren't driving those bigger vehicles, so it's intimidating to them if they choose to go to the driver position as a full-time position, it's only \$0.88 an hour to make that big jump to that position. And I say that the that the driver is the cog of our operations. You can give me the best firefighter you can, give me the best officer and put them on that truck. If that driver cannot get them to the scene safely, quickly and be able to operate that truck once they get there, their skill sets no good. So, the driver is that kingpin that makes everything work. And I want them to see that they're that kingpin, that it is that important of a job. Then we have for drivers can go to lieutenant as a bump up or they can do it full time. So, we're giving them two paths to be able to do that. Some of them are intimidated by making the jump to the position. So, this gives them like a little training ground to help them build their confidence. Learn that skill set a little more. But for a driver to go from a driver to a bump up lieutenant, which means he would fill in during that time is only \$0.35 an hour, five cents more than what it would be for the driver. Now they still have to fight fire. Our officers go in and fight fire. They don't get to stand outside and direct traffic. That's what the battalion chiefs will do. So, they're fighting fire, just like a firefighter. And they still have to

understand how to operate that fire truck, because at any given time, they may have to operate on the scene, or they may have to drive that fire truck. That's a rare occasion. We want to make sure it's rare, but they can never lose that skill set. So, as they go up through the ranks, more and more is being added to them. None is being taken away from them. If they choose to go from driver to lieutenant, it is only \$1 an hour increases in pay.

**CHIEF EDDINS:** The kids today and I call them kids because I'm an old dude. They look at the daughters. Only one of those positions offers \$1 to take on the responsibility. Everything else has changed. I asked the battalion chiefs, as we saw this coming, to go out and talk with their firefighters and ask, why are you not going up for the promotions? And all three of the battalion chiefs would come out and say, chief, it's about the money. And me thinking about what it was when I When I come through, I said, it's got to be something more than the money. So, I met with the firefighters on each shift, and I said, what's said in this room stays in this room. I will not tag your name to anything you say. Let's be open and honest. And every one of them said, chief, we want more money where we're at. I said, I agree, everybody that works for the city wants more money. So, let's take the money. Let's put it over here to the side. Now, why are you not going up for the position? And I got two main things.

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One was the truck the size of the truck. They'd never driven anything and then was training. They wanted more training to learn how to do that, because now you got math and you got to figure. And there's things you got to remember. So, you get the right amount of water at the end of that nozzle and just pull knobs and twist the handle. You got to know what I'm what you're doing, what the officers asked for. So, I would be a thief if I didn't tell this. I went to bed one night and I said, God, I'm at my wit's end. I don't know what to do. I've been doing this for 37 years and I don't have an answer for this. I woke up at 5:00 that next morning with a process going through my head. I got to work, and I started writing it out. We put it out in the department and when I came to the commission, I said, this plan is going to it's going to take me about three months to work it through to see if it works. I should have known it worked if God gave it to me. I can tell you now, out of that group that we had of the three shifts, we had eight driver's license that came through that process that nobody was trying to get a driver's license. Three of those had taken the position on full time. Even with that being done, I'm still going to be I'm on paper right now, four drivers short. I have two drivers in the process. They just want to be bump ups. They don't want to do it full time. But until and I've explained until we can get full time drivers, you're going to drive every day. But that's for \$0.30 an hour. They're willing to work that to the city. I told the commissioners that worst case scenario if we didn't get a handle on this that the potential for overtime. Because if those people weren't there, that meant we had to hire people over to cover for them. So, in a year's time, the potential overtime to hire just one of the lowest paid drivers and one of the lowest paid firefighters potentially could have been \$328,000. To hire two drivers over would have run us potentially \$353,000. We're halfway through the budget year and I pulled the numbers. Today is in the hours. Anytime I hire somebody overtime that doesn't come out of my salary account, it comes out of my overtime. Their time and a half come out of that overtime account. So, if 50% of the year passed in the salary account, I'm at 41.7 spin. That's good. That means I'm under 50%. I'm that much under in the overtime account. We're 67%. Now, some of that's going to be from Hurricane Helene. That's going to be maybe \$5,000. So, I don't have the exact figure in my head. I say that to say that the men and women of the Waycross Fire Department took ownership of this situation. The battalion chiefs got creative in how they staffed their crews. We should have been way more than this. I was thinking when I pulled these numbers, we were going to be in the 80% or better if we went by these numbers. So, if we did half of it, we would be in the 160,000 or 175,000 over what was budgeted. So by their creativity, I would I've been asked, but I would think that maybe some of them didn't take lead time when they had an opportunity to take it, because their commitment to the city and to each other, because it's a commitment to your to your fellow workers, um, took precedent and I applaud them for that effort because I'm telling you, I don't get rattled much, but I was rattled. If I bring something to the city manager and only to the commission, you can. You can bet I'm worried about it. And I was worried about this. And I appreciate the fact that our men and women stepped up across the board. So tonight, what I'm going to do. And I told you when I spoke with you that there would be a time if the program worked, that I

would come ask for a budget amendment. I didn't want to do it during the time that the budget was trying to be passed, and we were working through things because I just didn't want to mess stuff up. And at the time, I didn't have an answer. I didn't know how the ship was going to turn, but it's turned in the right direction. But as we take these people that are available now to fill the slots, we're going to have no backfill. So, my goal is to backfill. Ultimately, every firefighter should be a bump up driver once we fill the driver slots. Every driver should be a bump up lieutenant once we fill all the driver slots. What that does is cut overtime tremendously, because now the battalion chief can take those people that can bump up on their shift, and they just move them around as needed versus having to bring somebody over and pay them time and a half. We don't pay them any extra that if they're working on their shifts and that bump up, we take care of it now. So my proposal is that we give the firefighter the raise from firefighter to driver, that we make that a \$2 an hour raise, go back to the bump up where they were getting \$0.30. I would like to give them a dollar if they choose to do that bump up. And once we feel the driver's positions and they go to that bump up, that would be a dollar. If they go from bump up or they go all the way up to driver, that's a \$2 increase in doing that though, we've got to address. And that's the realignment part. We have to address the drivers already in position, the lieutenants and the captains that are already in positions. So, I would ask to do that do that \$2 raise for the firefighter

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to driver, we have to make a \$2 increase on those two positions. So, I'm asking for a consensus tonight to do a budget amendment for \$95,127 that covers the Fair Labor standard, overtime, anything over 106 hours. It's overtime for firefighters on the shift work that covers holiday pay and that covers their regular time. That covers everything. There's no leaving something out with those positions that will be open after December 24th. That will give a little bit of cushion in there, that those salaries aren't going to an individual that would help, maybe offset some of this, but I don't know what the picture looks like from day to day. Saturday, we had to hire more people overtime because there's a bug going around, and we don't know when that happens. And there are going to be times when people have to take vacation. I told y'all before, and I speak more about it now, is you don't live in the public safety realm, but one third of the lives of the people that work. Suppression in our fire department is at a fire station one third of their lives. And I thought about it this morning. Christmas is coming. So, whoever works Christmas Day, they either have to have their Christmas on New Year's Eve, or they have to get up extra early because they have to be at work at 7:00. So, they have to get their kids up 4 or 5:00 to have Christmas before they leave. So, we've got mom and Dad's that won't spend Christmas Day with their children unless they are able to come to the fire station. We've got the people that are working Christmas Eve that will have to decide in the general public. Doesn't understand that. I don't get complaints from my folks that are doing it, but that's the sacrifice that they make for this community. And a lot of people don't understand that. So, when they make a sacrifice to say, hey, I'll give up a vacation to help keep overtime down so that we cannot over blow our budget, but we can come back, hopefully and get something to help make it worthwhile. And these are people that it may not affect right off because they understand about the driver slot. And I also want to thank the men and women that were willing to work overtime. That meant they took more time away from their family, and that helped tremendously for the times that we needed them. We've got a very good bunch of folks not only in the fire service, the citywide, but as a fire chief. Now, I have to address our final issue. And Lieutenant is going to be something that we've got to watch in the future, because those six positions that are seven, ultimately that we didn't have filled at that time, that means they've got less time in that driver position, which means my pool is smaller. Of those 18 drivers that do have some time to move up to the next level. So, I think all the way through this motivates people to say the chief has taken everything off the table. I've done everything I can do. The battalion chiefs, the men and women of the fire department have done everything we can do to resolve this problem. It's in your hands now to take care of it now and to move forward. I can do no more. The city manager can do more. No more with this. Um, power is a pretty tough thing. Sometimes when you have to deal with it, it makes a tough decision. But we're at one of those points now. Moving today, moving forward, I want to set the next chief up in a good position that they come in, and that's not a problem that they have to deal with. So, mayor, I would like to ask for that consensus if we can move forward to move it to the actual approval for tomorrow night.

**MAYOR:** Thank you. With that, I'm going to go to each district leader to give them the opportunity to not only comment, but also to give their consent. And I'll start with district one. Yes, sir. I give my consent.

**BENNETT:** District two. Okay. I just want to ask one question. It was \$95,127. Yes, ma'am. Okay. Yes, sir.

**FELDER:** District three. Yes.

**HOPKINS:** District four. Yes, sir.

**NELSON:** And district five. Yes, sir.

**MAYOR:** Consider to consent given. Merry Christmas for you. Thank you very much. Yes. Happy retirement.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. We'll move back into a Covid decision. Um, so. So, first of all, um, I want to thank you again for always fighting for the men and women of our fire department.



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Uh, all our directors fight very hard for our workforce. Um, we do have some constraints. And as I stated up front, I have been tiptoeing a very thin line, uh, to get this workforce, uh, the added monies where we could, uh, even with this decision right now. Um, I did meet with Chief Evans, uh, finance director myself, and we all got together, and we've had several meetings on this to make sure we could cover that as a general fund, and we can. That was the was a question. So that's not a problem. Um, the next the next area though is the cold. And I brought this up last week. I bought a few other times. And like I said, the big thing I'm not just about the firemen, police. Because what I've learned over the last going on two years in March that they're out here doing their job sometimes. And I'll be the first to admit we can't pay them what they probably deserve in comparison to other cities. I said that up front. Um, but whatever we can do, I'm trying to do, um, legally, more than the financially responsible, um, for them so that I hear, like Chief Edna said, um, and Chief Cocker said and sometimes forget about the public works they first to shoot out here in the storm before anybody else. So, um, so they put their lives in danger as well. But the cold situation and, um, and you can read there about the cola, um, in many ways to, to make this work. Um, I mentioned the CPI. So, we're not taking money out of the general fund to put it in other funds or to pay for repairs and stuff like that. Um, I've talked about other ways to, to increase revenue. Um, and I hear that there will be more. Um, in the next, the next items here. Um, but what I know based off of you can see there at the bottom there. Uh, since 2000, 20, 2015, we made the following adjustments, you know, 3%, 2%. And the operator was the big one. Uh, we probably should have done, but we did. Um, on the big raise. And then 22, 21, we do everything 22 4%. 23, 2.5 and then 3.5. We did for 2024. Um, I said this last week, I feel comfortable knowing we can do an amendment of 4% by not doing anything, but at the same time, we make other adjustments. Um, we probably do a little bit more of that. Um, the issue is now we you get behind on property tax and sales tax. That's not out yet. Uh, once that comes back in, we'll definitely know what we're saying financially. Um, but just look at the numbers. We're actually going to have some additional revenue. Um, and then move forward each year. So, I'm asking right now tax last. We're going to ask again. Um I don't want to keep having this keep hanging out here for our workforce. So I'm saying at a minimum we start at baseline at 4%. And then the month of April I will return to the commission, me and the finance director, and we will get our financial records together and we will inform the commission. Um, if we need to move lower than that or go higher than that, and we'll know every year, April, because that'll be pretty much three fourths of the year, the financial year. And then based off that history, and once again, if you look at what we've done so far in the past. Um, that 4.0 is not a stretch from 2015 when we first kind of started doing the Covid adjustments. Um, this is This is about morale more than anything else. Um, this is also about trying to get as close as we can to these other cities, um, that have more capabilities than we do. And I would refer to Douglas again. You know, there are more producers than we are. So, they can do things a

little better to us. I know, um, our workforce often compares those salaries. Um, it's not a fair assessment or comparison, but I understand the comparison, so I'm simply stating. So this is not constantly hanging out there for the workforce for the whole year. Um, then we start at 4% because we can do 4%. And then if anything goes wrong, we will come back in April. But I would like to get a concession that we at least start there. Um, and the workforce can at least hear that out loud. Um, then we want to start there, and then it's like I said, something happens. I'll come back to the body and explain to the workforce if we got to go lower. And I pause there for questions. Mr. mayor.

**MAYOR:** Thank you. Go ahead and hold the commission. And if they have any comments to make Later while being asked to give either consent or non-consent. District one. Yes, sir. district. two. Yes, sir. district three.

**FLEDER:** I have a question.

**MAYOR:** Okay.

**FELDER:** Um, Mr. City Manager, earlier you mentioned that you had ideas to bring in revenue along with making other adjustments for additional revenue. Can you elaborate on that, please? Because

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the only thing that I've heard in terms of additional revenue is increasing rates, whether it be for water or sewage rates, whether it be for business license. Um, and so forth. So, could you please elaborate?

**CITY MANAGER:** I'm going to I'm going to hit that in the infrastructure update. Commissioner, if I can discuss the black Shell media project. The stormwater policy update on the life cycle program, I'm going to touch on that. Then I will say also that I mentioned too, about divesting from certain things. So, if we can't do the Do Nikola and retain the workforce because y'all know many people have left and we get new employees every day. Um, we're going to start divesting from certain other activities that we do. So, if you allow me to speak on that in the next session, I'll speak on that in the next session, please.

**FELDER:** Thank you.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner three

**FELDER:** I'll wait till he speaks.

**MAYOR:** Ok, district four.

**HOPKINS:** Um, I have some questions about where we're going to get this money and how long term it's going to be and how it's going to finance, how it's going to affect our finance. So, I have some questions as well. So, I look at the table at this time to come back with us next. Week.

**MAYOR:** And district five.

**NELSON:** Put it on the agenda. Please, sir.

**MAYOR:** Okay. We have three consents.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mister Mayor.

**CITY MANAGER:** Uh, next, Mister mayor. Um, as far as finance update, you have an equipment repair request? The backhoe for public works. Do you have a copy of that invoice on your desk? Uh.

What happened? Uh, the fix was about more than what I can authorize. It came to \$10,000 and 110, \$110.88. And I'm just asking the commission to go ahead and allow us to pay for that back on repair.

**MAYOR:** And for the commission. District one. Yes, sir. District two. Yes, sir. District three yes and district four. Yes. District five. Yes, sir. We have consensuses.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Uh, next we move to the infrastructure update, and we're going to start with the Blackshear Media project. And Mr. Hale just asked, you asked how can we, uh, bring in additional revenue streams? And this is one, um, one of One of the areas I know I missed quite a few times as well. Um, because we know that side of our neighbor, they cannot produce their own water for their industrial park and they're in great need of water. Uh, we have the excess capacity to provide that water. Uh, it will be at a charge. Um, it's mainly a a it mainly will be. A utility service, that's my goal. District utility service. And pay for that flat rate of that water. Uh, I do not know the gallons yet. How much use they will have or the number of customers we will have. Uh, I do know we will be looking at, um, the biggest meter possible going out there. Our meter. Um, I know that, uh, also part of that when we had the discussion on the meter size and the customers. Uh, we'll be asking them to kind of do some maintenance on the lift station out there, because that's part of the process as well that, you know, prevent me from having to do it. Um, they kind of open to that because like I said, they

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can't live on water. And what I'm going to do, I'm going to let Mr. Charlie Bridges again one more time and kind of explain how that charge looks to the commission. And once again, this is a right now I'm waiting for us to bring in revenue. We don't have we're not losing capacity on water. We're actually gaining additional revenue that goes right back into the water and sewer fund and allow us to do more repair work.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Good evening, commissioners. Just I wanted to touch on what Mr. Raiford's referring to is what's called a system development charge. And so, we have several clients around the state that that have enacted these charges. And I just want to explain what it is and what it's for, just kind of in general. So, you would understand what it is that we're talking about. And so, if you think about your existing water and sewer system, okay, it's paid for. Um, and what the system development charge would be. So, your water and sewer rates that we just talked about is for keeping that existing infrastructure maintained and operational. What a system development charge does is establish a charge for future development, and what a future customer would do in terms of your existing capacity. So, what a system development charge is in the instance of Blackshear or a big commercial customer, for instance, you would do this across the board, by the way, or you would have this for commercial customers, for residential customers. So, everybody that every new customer that would come in and want to attach to your system is going to eat up some amount of capacity. And what they would do is pay a system development charge proportional to their usage, that you would put in a separate account to be used for system expansion or system upgrade. So not repairing failing water lines or failing sewer lines, that's what your water and sewer rates are for. This would be for increasing water line size, or running new water and sewer lines to serve new customers out in different parts that are unserved. In the existing city system service area. So, I know that's a little complicated. So, if you have questions, I'm sure you do. I'd take questions right now.

**MAYOR:** Commissioners, do you have any questions?

**HOPKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. How much. How many customers are we talking about and what kind of rates are you going to give them above the water.

**CITY MANAGER:** So, Commissioner, what we're going to do right now, I'm just asking to start the project because I said we don't know the capacity yet or all the customers. We just didn't want to go out there on that road, only to come back and then not be able to do it. Um, like I said, the industrial park, they have numerous businesses coming in there, so I don't know the total number of businesses

coming that way, but they can't bring in water across the town to them. They have no other choice but to, you know, get water from us. So, what I would like to do is just start talking to the city of Blackshear, get the numbers in the data. I don't want to waste your time with the engineering firm. And we're going to come back, and we're going to say no and not do it. But I just want to explain because this is a way to bring in additional revenue. Um, because we will need, as Charles mentioned, expansion, you know, for those housing developments that that come to the city and they're going to want a concession. That's the way we do it. And we want them to come here and do things like a Scout lake. Um, you know, bring the water all the way there. So we've proven that water source there because there will be a new development. So I don't know those yet. Commissioner, I'm going to ask you right now to kind of get it consistent just to go ahead and start that discussion with the city of Blackshear and get those numbers, and we'll come back come back once I get all that got up and represent this. It's just been. We've shot it down from the get-go in the beginning. And I stated earlier, we've got to find other ways to bring in this revenue to the city. This is just one and I apologize for questions on that.

**HOPKINS:** Thank you. Um, maybe. Anybody sitting in this audience has a water bill that their fees they have faced, um. On their portion because they pay taxes. They pay taxes. So why aren't we asking them to annex the property and get the revenue from the property tax so.

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**CITY MANAGER:** Because then commission I would be happy to do is expand our emergency services. Yeah. And maintain their roads.

**HOPKINS:** Yeah.

**CITY MANAGER:** It would actually cost me more to go down that road.

**HOPKINS:** I've got some numbers on this.

**CITY MANAGER:** But we know that just in general based off of the other decisions made in the past. So right now, by doing this alone, I'm getting that we will be getting Again that extra revenue without having to do all those other, uh, tasks for the black sheep.

**HOPKINS:** And that how about the order to maintain the parks and just seeing that?

**CITY MANAGER:** We will maintain we will drop that on that side, and they will maintain everything for that meal will be on them to Maintain.

**HOPKINS:** About the lift station of Parliament.

**CITY MANAGER:** I will be requesting them to help upgrade the station, because we will be buying services.

**HOPKINS:** And I suggest we don't do this, that they pay some kind of feed like we do taxes on our own property taxes. And I would suggest that they maintain all of that legislation because we've already had it one time and it cost us a lot of money. And if we don't recoup the money we're spending and we're spinning our wheels by getting rid of them, and not all the maintenance goes with it.

**CITY MANAGER:** I think they're open to that legislation. I just want to open up discussion with them, and I don't want to do it if we're going to come back and just not do it. Um, but I have talked to him, to the county manager there, and some of the minutes they all they all forward y'all. They're all for doing what they can to get the water service to that location. I mean, the hill station is where.

**HOPKINS:** You're talking about. You talked about there.

**CITY MANAGER:** I did. Okay. Well, I'd like further.

**HOPKINS:** Discussion on what you're going to be looking. At before I decide. I'd like to know what how we're going to. Generate all this revenue because that's not cheap to keep up with all that infrastructure. And we already have one person out there that when we went to court, they didn't have to pay any. None. Except what we are paying them. We're paying. Taxes.

**HOPKINS:** That's a totally different situation commissioner, totally situation. I'm just providing service, which is water, to a customer who will never be associated with. I'm not maintaining the streets, providing police service or anything else. So just straight water safety water is a fee they pay us.

**HOPKINS:** And I'd like for you to show me how you're going to address that, so we covered that.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner you have something to say.

**NELSON:** Mr. mayor, it's my understanding that we're just trying to. Open dialog. It's about the process of looking at these things that will possible benefit us. Correct.

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**CITY MANAGER:** Correct Commissioner

**NELSON:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor,

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** And can I just add to that, um, what I probably did a very poor job of explaining what I was talking about. What I'm asking, I guess, to look into is a city-wide system development charge. Um, not specifically for the project that Mr. Reagan was talking Now this would be for new customers anywhere in the, in the in the city that would choose to come connect to our system. We would establish a set charge that would be upfront and go specifically towards future system expansion. And then they would pay their regular water and sewer rate per month like everybody else, so they could be in the city limits, outside the city limits, that that's a specific case that that Mr. Ray was talking about. But what I would like to do is present the commission with a service delivery charge schedule, so you can see broken down by meter size, what that charge. Would look like.

**HOPKINS:** I agree. That would be nice.

**MAYOR:** Thank you. Any other questions for Mr. Bridges, District one, no sir District two. no sir, district three, no, thank you for your time today.

**CITY MANAGER:** All right, Mr. Mayor. Thank you. Next, we move to the stormwater. Stormwater quality update. As you know. what we need to do now is educate the public on what stormwater is. If you didn't know, it's probably dropped off, um, right prior to my arrival here. The then city attorney was handling this. I've just kind of picked this back up, recently, and I kind of started over. so there will be some concessions made some of our bigger our bigger customers as far as the stormwater facilities. And I'm misinforming the commissioner on what's going on with that. So, the engineering firm, city attorney and I, we are working on what that charge looks like moving forward. Um, like I said, you're probably getting calls from certain So These requiring where we're going to get that done. Um, we're working on its kind of was dropped for a few years. I just picked it back up. Um, once I get the service charges and the rates, um, aligned the right way, we'll bring this back to the commission. Um, this is another way to also, um, not only bring revenue, but also address because this will be for

stormwater only. But we do need a policy that's in place to kind of outline what it is. Um, I know some of our citizens assume it is for the canal. If it is for the canal in some cases. But I just want to let you inform the commission what we're doing. And if they have any questions that that might come from certain citizens. Just so we're all working it. I'd like to have it resolved early next year. January time frame. Once I sit down with Trey and me and the city attorney, and once we get those suggested, we'll come back to the commission and let everybody know how that policy shakes out. Okay. Uh, but then the question was whether they should move into the life cycle program. And Charlie just mentioned that, kind of offhand, what we're going to do, and I think the finance director is on me with this. We're going to go over the next six months, its inventory, all our equipment, all our equipment, like lift stations or pumps, get the inventory on the dates and times they will install, life cycle, expected life cycle of them, the equipment itself. And we're going to create a chart. And from that chart we're going to go ahead and base our budget of repairing those parts. Um, right now we've been faced since my time here is if stuff breaks, we just go fix it. You know, I'm trying to get ahead. This is another way to raise revenue, because right now we're just, like you said, emergency. We have to spend money. It's going to cost more. Um, when this life cycle program this year, what we're going to do is go ahead and start when we can buy those parts. We know our life cycle. We'll We're going back in the same capacity computers. After every two years you place them, it's going to be the same concept. Um, by doing this, I think we definitely will get we definitely will get ahead on our repair work. Like I said, right now we're just reacting to stuff when it breaks. Um, this inventory, I'm not sure what caused inventory, um, is, is getting that cost is getting that cost to me right now. Um, once they get that cost, like I said, we're going to inventory all our stuff, vehicles, everything, and moving forward, we'll put that in the budget. Um, you know, and it'll be periodically that we buy stuff. But when I bring it to the commission, you'll

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know why. Um, if it's if it's trying to think of some of the pumps in the plant, we already know they're past their 20-year life cycle mark. So, I'm going to go ahead and start ordering those next budget cycles. So, when that pump does go out, you have that replacement already. And we probably get a better price if you go ahead and kind of research it right now versus wait for it to go out and have to come back to y'all in an emergency and then buy it. So, um, just letting me Which know what that is. And like I say, the inventory, we have a cost to it and getting that costume. And once they get that costume, me, I will bring it back to the commission. And then we'll start that program and I'll pause there for any questions on that.

**MAYOR:** District one does you have any questions? No, sir, district two, No, sir. District three, no, District four, I have asked my questions, and district five no sir.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you. Uh, next, Mr. mayor, we're moving to the SPLOST. And what I want to do here is I mentioned before the 2023 SPLOST. Um, when we first put this together and see that cost on there, it was roughly about \$17 million. Just some time ago. I'm estimating that cost to be double at this time. So what this means with the SPLOST won't be able to get all the equipment that was put in there, because it would be much more expensive right now. So, what I'm doing is prioritizing the plan to, you know, maximize what we collect at the last meeting. We'll still be able to use that money around March time frame. And what I'd like to do, of course. And I'll let the rest go. I'll show you this in a little bit. Um, I want to start with the list. I want to go with 75% of public works during that first quarter. And then I want to go 50% for the police and fire the next quarter. And then next quarter, I would like to do community improvement and admin. And then the final quarter, at this time next year we'll get the parks. And if you look, um, that's the cost that we did when we first did, um, put in for this project, it was 17 million. That was some years ago. And you might see that. Um, but these are some of the items, the police department, some of this stuff already. That's why I decided to go focus on the police department, because a lot of that has already been done through other means. So, um, we just bought some police cars for them, so they'll be in the in the next quarter. Public works is is has the most on here. Um, many service vehicles, equipment, all those things that we need. So out of that list, I would try I would try to do at least 75% of that over the first quarter next to the fire department. That's pretty much done already. Um, for what they need. Um, same thing with community, um, improvement, since we have a new shelter already out, basically just replacing a few

things there. Um, and then public buildings. We're just talking about the auditorium need to be done. And then now that you see the parks, um, at 300,000. So that park money, it will probably come in at the end of next year. We know right now. I know it's a big focus. We've got the three parts getting redone. Um, this one we click this time next year. Wants to get that money and we'll try to, like I said earlier about those issues in issues in the park. We would try to address every other part with that money. I think that was his intended purpose. But right now, I think we all recognize that public works probably needs to be a priority as far as vehicles. Um, you saw some of the vehicles on there, additional lawn mowers, um, uh, blowers, all those things that nature. So, um, and it's just the first year, um, come back the next year, I'll do the same process, say 5%, 50, 50, 50 and try to make up for the rest of those pieces of equipment. We don't get this first year-round. So I apologize for any questions on that splash concerns.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner Hopkins.

**HOPKINS:** Um, my gazebo over at Monroe Park. Will that come out of those funds or. I have parked money and I want Greg to look at. Because I know I have a spending part money on that.

**CITY MANAGER:** And you got part money. I don't, but that that gazebo is probably running about \$50,000 right now. So that that would destroy your park money. So, like I said, the plan would be and although it might take a take a year or two. Once that money comes in, hit those big-ticket items, big casinos and stuff of that nature. Then we'll be out at 300,000. That's in 2023.

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**HOPKINS:** All right. And another thing. You haven't mentioned the pickleball courts lately.

**CITY MANAGER:** Yeah, I was still waiting on that board. I think you spoke to that gentleman. The last word I got; they were voting on it. I talked to him a couple of weeks ago. I'll get with Mark tomorrow to see where they at. On pickleball, of course. Any further question, Mr. Mayor? No, sir. All right.

**CITY MANAGER:** Uh, next, we will move into the January committee. Board appointments. Starting with the election, mayor pro temp there.

**HOPKINS:** Mr. mayor. I Nominate Katrena as Mayor Pro Temp.

**MAYOR:** We'll do that when we do that in January. Or do you want it done tonight?

**HOPKINS:** Well, he's got an agenda.

**CITY MANAGER:** Yeah. Um. He was he was asked last week to.

**MAYOR:** Take motions in the session. Yeah. Get consent. just like we've been doing something right.

**CITY MANAGER:** It's on the list, Mr. Mayor.

**MAYOR:** Right. We're doing the list, and then we'll come back.

**CITY MANAGER:** Okay. So I did that, you know. Of course. Um, this is for the city officers, presented by the mayor and confirmed by the commission. We had a city attorney. We had an assistant city attorney. We had an official, Waycross Journal- Herald, City Depository will be the bank city auditors, the Maulding and Jenkins company, city engineers, SC engineering, municipal judge, judge Douglas Gibson, Municipal Court Judge pro-temp, Mr. Gibson, Mrs. Gibson, insurance

agents. You see the insurance agents there? And the city election, election superintendent. And of course, that's the Ware County Board of elections and Registration.

**MAYOR:** So, we've done the announcement of those who received officers. And also, there was a statement made in the form of a motion, actually, for Commissioner Schroeder to be the mayor pro temp for the following year. We can bring this to our meeting tomorrow, but these lists will be here. But what I wanted to make sure that everyone knows that you have to consent to all we're doing is consent to have these items on our agenda tomorrow to make these decisions. So, we're not going to actually vote on anything tonight, but we can make the recommendation tonight. Right. And the recommendation. Thank you.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner Felder.

**FELDER:** Thank you. About the announcement of city Offices in the city attorney. The last action that I remember this commission took was we were in a process of selecting for a city attorney, and the vote came down to you and you abstained. You said that we will wait until we have a full board. And that was the last that I heard of this. So where do we stand?

**MAYOR:** We just had a full board. You're talking to me now? Yes. Okay. Well, with that being said, since we now have a full board, we'll go through the process of deciding. We wanted to. I think we have just the name right now.

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**CITY MANAGER:** And I believe I put that back out for competition. So the two candidates that are here and the other candidate, both we submitted for the position. I thought we would just recommit when we repost it so we can set up interviews or interviews or whatever the commission decides they want to do at this point.

**MAYOR:** And the reason I say what I said, generally, the mayor in the city of Waycross can vote on certain issues but cannot get rid of anyone. That is a decision that's made by the commission. Now, we also made mention that there will be opportunities for things to go before the General Assembly in the month of January, which would be items that would give some power to the mayor to do particular things. Aside from having just emergency powers on that will be determined by this commission. With that being said, I did make mention that I withheld my vote, and I generally do because we only had at that time three commissioners and not five. And I understood where we were at the moment. One of those things, just like the gentleman asked earlier, how do you make a decision? Generally, when lists are given to me, I do everything alphabetically, and you probably found that out already. Those who pay attention to me, but whose name is on the list. I go by the list based on the list, unless you're going to do it from ascending order versus descending order. But the goal here is to make sure that all the commissioners have opportunity to listen, and also to make a decision regarding the persons who will be standing here in the States or places on these boards. And I know I'm on multiple boards. When it gets down to the appointment of boards, I actually sit in on various boards and the mayor pro temp, whomever that may be, can give them points to step in for me, this is the fifth year, so I've had five miracle attempts thus far. So it's kind of interesting just to go back through it and think, think through how we make decisions, because these people are going to have to actually go to things that I can't go through. And obviously I'm having some fun with my situation. So that gives them an opportunity to do that. Thank you. And Commissioner Felder and the commissioner and commissioner Nelson.

**FELDER:** I'd just like to make a point of clarification. I asked the question regarding the pronouncement of the city attorney because of what I saw advertised regarding the position on our city's website, as well as on our Facebook page. Thank you. Okay.

**MAYOR:** And Commissioner Nelson

**NELSON:** So, Mr. Mayor. Um, with the election of Mayor Pro temp, I would like to go back and. Throw Commissioner. Bennett's name in the hat, please, sir.

**MAYOR:** So, we have two names for tomorrow.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Next, we move to executive positions as recommended by the mayor and by the commission. I'll go down the list. I'd be downtown. Most of these mayors are the Downtown Development Authority on the library board of trustees. We crossed convention in the South Georgia Commission. Transportation planning coordinating committee with county Board of Health records. Work on development authority with Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce. And that is all for that list. Mr. mayor. Next, Mr. mayor. We'll move into the Pensions Committee for retirement fund. And you see there the names on there will be the mayor, city manager, city attorney, finance director, city commissioner and human resource Do it. Mr. Mayor if there's no question on that. Next, we'll move into the ethics board recommendation to be presented by Miss Shawn Taylor.

**SHAWN TAYLOR:** Mr. mayor and Commission, I am presenting the final order of the Board of Ethics in the case of Clayton Nelson, complainant versus Katrina Felder, respondent. I will read it into the record. I have given the original to the city clerk for filing, and at this time she is passing out copies so that you can follow along as I read.



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**SHAWN TAYLOR:** Order of the Board of Ethics. The above and foregoing matter having come before the Board of Ethics. City of Waycross. Georgia, pursuant to notice for a final hearing on November 15th, 2024. The complainant was present and was represented by Kimberly L Copeland, Attorney at Law, and the respondent was also present and was represented by Adam Craft, Attorney at Law. The board, having deliberated on November 21st, 2024, and concluded deliberations on said date, the board having scheduled a meeting on December 2nd, 2024, for the purpose of taking a public vote and having continued, said meeting due to lack of a quorum of board members. The board having rescheduled the public vote meeting for December 5th, 2024 and having voted in a public meeting on said date that there was a violation of the City of Waycross Code of Ethics by respondent by unanimous consent, but thereafter lost his quorum following said public vote due to the abrupt departure of departure of a sitting board member and the board having rescheduled the meeting to take a public vote on the penalty phase of the pending complaint. On December 13th, 2024, after hearing and considering the evidence presented by both parties and the argument of the Council, the board makes the following findings of fact. Conclusions of law and order. Findings of fact. One. The complaint Clayton Nelson filed the complaint against the respondent, Commissioner Katrina Felder, alleging violations of the Code of Ethics for the City of Waycross, Georgia, on September 2nd, 2024. Two. The complaint alleged that the respondent purchased a secret code and entry into a club in Atlanta, Georgia, known for adult entertainment meetings. Three. The complaint also alleged that the respondent charged several expensive meals on the city's credit card, where more than one person was paid for by the by the City of Waycross. These charges far exceeded the food allowance for the day for. The complaint also alleged that the respondent traveled on a Partizan non authorized trip in conference to Atlanta, Georgia, and utilized the city's vehicle and credit card for expenses. Five the complainant filed supplemental information to support the original complaint on October 24th, 2024, setting forth additional credit card misuse allegations, including the respondent they seated her 2023 and 2024 travel budgets and receipts totaling \$3,964.90 were not turned in with the expense vouchers. Six the board concluded I'm sorry. The board conducted a thorough investigation of the allegations in the complaint prior to the final hearing, including interviewing the complainant, the city finance director, the city manager and other city commissioners and city staff. The board also obtained and reviewed credit card receipts and transactions of commissioners in their travel expense vouchers. Seven. The board finds that with respect to the allegations regarding the use of a city credit card at the

red phone booth in Atlanta, Georgia, the evidence showed that Commissioner Felder, along with two other commissioners and the mayor, did travel to Atlanta, Georgia, for the purpose of attending a conference and ate at Amalfi Pizza, which is housed in the same building as the red phone booth. Further research by the board found that the red phone booth is not an adult entertainment facility, but a respectable establishment attended by adults only because of its theme, which centers around prohibition. Eight. The board finds that with respect to the allegations regarding the use of the city credit card to purchase expensive meals for more than one person, this allegation is credible. The respondent purchased expensive meals for more than one-person numerous times. Nine. The board finds that with respect to the allegation that the respondent traveled to a Democratic partizan function known as the Wing Conference in Atlanta and utilized the city's vehicle and credit card for expenses. This allegation is credible. The board finds that the respondent attended the wing conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Ten. The board finds that with respect to the allegations that respondent's 2023 expenses exceeded her approved budget, based on documentation obtained from the city's finance department, the respondent exceeded her, approved her approved travel and training budget by \$1,083. 11. The board finds that the respondent's approved budget for 2023 was in the amount of \$10,000. Dollars 12. The board finds that with respect to the allegations that the respondents 2024 expenses exceeded her approved budget based on documentation obtained from the city's finance department. As of March 31st, 2024, the respondent exceeded her approved travel and training budget by \$3,167.60 \$7. 13 the board finds that the respondents approved budget for 2024 is in the amount \$10,000. 14 the board finds that with respect to the allegation that respondent used her city credit card on January 27th, 2024, to pay for dinner at Cut Steakhouse in the amount of \$225.20 before guests, which violates the policy of providing dinner for a spouse only. This allegation is credible. The respondent violated the city's credit card use policy. The

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complainant provided a copy of the receipt, which supported the allegation by a preponderance of evidence. 15. The board finds that with respect to the allegations that respondent used her city credit card to pay for meals in Waycross, at local residents, at local restaurants, and was not on city business at the time, this allegation is credible. The complainant provided numerous credit card receipts supporting the allegations as follows An Applebee's on the 24th day of March 2023 at 10:58 p.m., in the amount of \$26.22. B Hogs and Bones on the 25th day of March 2023 at 8:51 a.m., in the amount of \$3.98. C Wendy's on the eighth day of January 2024 at 8:12 p.m. in the amount of 1423. D hogs and bones on the 25th day of January 2024 at 12:10 p.m. in the amount of 1423 and dairy Queen on the 20th day of June 2024 at 9:06 p.m. In the amount of 83, based on testimony from the city Manager, Ulysses Rayford. All travel and training for official city business must be approved and voted on by the governing body. The respondent did not request prior approval from the Commission or the City Manager prior to incurring the above unauthorized credit card charges in the City of Waycross. 16. The board finds that the city's Finance Department does not provide any oversight regarding monitoring of credit card spending by city credit card users. 17. The board finds that the respondent attended ethics training after being elected to her position as a city commissioner. Her training transcripts showed that she received six hours of ethics training.

**SHAWN TAYLOR:** 18. The board finds that the city of Waycross has a credit card use policy, which all persons who are issued credit cards are expected to follow. 19. The board finds that the respondent was familiar with the credit card use policy for the City of Waycross, because the City Commission adopted resolution 1872, approving a government credit card policy for all employees and officers of the city, and resolution 22 dash 72 to approve updates to the personnel, policies and procedures pertaining to per diem travel and training. Further, the policy is written in the handbook, which is given to all city employees. The City Commission and the mayor. 20. The board finds that the city's credit card use policy is not strictly enforced among all users of the city. Credit card. 21. The board finds that the respondent was not warned about her credit card spending but was made aware that she had exceeded her travel training budget. Her documentation obtained from the city's finance department. 22. The board finds that the city's finance department nor city manager provided any oversight of credit card usage by the city commission. The city manager testified that attending a Partisan event at the city's expense is prohibited, but a written policy was not provided to the board. Conclusion of law. The City of Waycross has a code of ethics found in part two. Code of ordinances, chapter two administration. Article three. Code of ethics two. The respondent's complaint and supplemental information were duly filed as provided by the City of Waycross Code of Ethics. Three. The following sections from the City of Waycross Code of Ethics are applicable to the facts of this case. To wit. Section 2-1 29 use of city property. No official or employee shall use or permit the use of any city property, services, personnel, labor, or anything of value for personal gain or for any purpose other than the official business of the city. Any parties violating this provision shall be required to pay to the city a sum equal to the value of the benefits received and shall likewise be deemed to have violated the provisions of this article. Section 21-1 32. Use of government purchasing or credit cards. No elected mayor or city or elected city commissioner shall be issued a government purchasing card or a government credit card until said elected official has signed an agreement indicating that he will use said government purchasing card or government credit card in accordance with the policies of the city and with the requirements of state law.

**SHAWN TAYLOR:** For the complainant did not prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the respondent violated the City of Waycross Code of Ethics regarding use of city property, that is, city automobile. No clear evidence was presented to support this alleged violation. Five. The complainant did prove, by a preponderance of the evidence that the respondent violated the City of Waycross Code of Ethics regarding use of Government Purchasing card by purchasing expensive meals for more than one person, exceeding the daily per diem and allotted annual budget, and purchasing numerous meals and snacks in Waycross. When not conducting official city business without prior approval by the city Manager or City Commission. Six. The respondent's unauthorized use of the government purchasing Card to purchase personal items for herself, and others was a form of theft by city resources.

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**SHAWN TAYLOR:** Order of the Board of Ethics. Based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law. The board has assessed the penalty against the respondent, which it believes is appropriate based upon the seriousness of her continuing misuse and abuse of her city credit card and charging privileges. The penalty options before the board, as provided by the City of Waycross Code of Ethics, are set forth below. A no admonishment and no further action. B a public reprimand and admonishment not to violate the ethics code in the future. C formal reprimand. D public censure. E recommendation for termination, resignation or recall and f recommendation of prosecution in city court. It is hereby ordered as follows. The penalty for the respondent shall be recommendation of prosecution in City Court. City of Waycross. Code of ethics, section 2-167. So ordered this 13th day of December 2020 for the Board of Ethics. City of Waycross, Georgia.

**CITY MANAGER:** Do you have any questions, Mr. Mayor?

**MAYOR:** I do not.

**CITY MANAGER:** Okay.

**FELDER:** I think it's actually a request based upon the order that was just read. I would appreciate it if, uh, whomever is responsible would provide me a copy of all the documents regarding the findings of facts, numbers one through 22. For all the allegations that the Ethics Board deemed as credible. I would like copies of all of those.

**CITY MANAGER:** Will do Commissioner?

**FELDER:** Thank you,

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Mr. Mayor and Commissioners just to inform you and the public of the next steps. I think an additional sheet was passed out to you. Summary of code provisions regarding after the Board of Ethics presents a pilot order. You should have that before you. So, the next step is that

after a final decision by the Board of Ethics has been presented to this commission and it was just presented, you have to set a public meeting in order to address this order. But before you do that, the respondent has ten days from issuance of the order on December the 13th to file an appeal with the city manager, and then the commission will be notified of the appeal at its next regular work session if one is filed. And then you have to set a date for a hearing from that work session within 45 days. Um, the notice of the hearing has to be delivered to And, uh, the, uh, pelvic, uh, whoever. Appeals, uh, notice, uh, at least ten days before you decide to have that hearing within that 45-day period. And, uh, at the conclusion of your hearing, uh, the city commission shall render its opinion by a public vote. Uh, you can either affirm the decision of the Board of Ethics, or you can reverse the decision of the Board of Ethics and enter a decision of a less severe nature. Or you can remand the case to the board. Remand means to send back for further consideration. So those are your three options.

**HOPKINS:** Mr. Mayor.

**HOPKINS:** Commissioner Hopkins

**HOPKINS:** Um. Mr. Attorney, I don't know if this is appropriate at this time, but, they read a lot of stuff that the, um. I was thinking that they're investigating the red phone booth. The big red phone booth or whatever it was. I understand they were investigating that, but why did we start digging in? And then we complained about that. So why do we continue to let them talk about Popeye's or Long's or wherever it was? Why do you continue to let them talk about that? When the Ethics complaint wasn't against that, it was against the big Red?

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**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Well, the ethics complaint was against the red phone attendants at the red phone booth. And it was also about credit card use, any inappropriate use of the credit cards that was also in the initial complaint. And then it was, uh, it was further supplemented by some additional, uh, submissions about credit card use. So that was the investigation involved both.

**HOPKINS:** So, it was about credit card use, period. Yes. And in the big grid. It was about.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Both. You'll see that in the initial complaint, and you'll see it also in the additional information that was supplied with tobacco.

**HOPKINS:** So, she actually went to a pizza place and it was pizza, not new gentlemen's club. That is not correct.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** I think the board dismissed that part of the allegations against you. They found that it was not credible that she went to an adult entertainment establishment.

**HOPKINS:** That she seemed. To other commissioners and the mayor, they all ate together. So that's the reason I was wondering why they all were at the same place. I was just a complaint about that. A very big restaurant.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** That's how the complaint that started it out. Regarding the red barn roof. That was at the very beginning of that complaint. But also, within the body of that complaint was, uh, any, uh, possible misuse of the credit card. And he had he offered to help investigate it, you know, he wasn't needed to do that. But that was also in the. Complaint as well.

**HOPKINS:** Okay. So, you found that. It was a pizza place and not bread.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** That's right,

**MAYOR:** But that's what's in our document.

**HOPKINS:** Yeah.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** That's right. That's what the board found that it was a mafia pizza establishment where the, uh, city officials, it was not an adult entertainment center. So, they did make that finding. That was in favor for Mr. Feldman.

**HOPKINS:** And the charge, the charge. And the then I take some charge cards and then I take one charge cards to businesses. So, when you pay your rent from one of my businesses, it comes up one day when you when you pay me, the other business comes up another mine is one credit card name runs two businesses. So basically, that's what this place did. I guess it was a big surprise. And then they paid for it. But where she went was actually, she and the mayor and she and Henry, well, they all of those when it was a pizza place, right?

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** That's right. Okay. And again, they dismissed that particular payment that she went to an adult entertainment place at the Red bone.

**Speaker 2:** okay, I wanted to just clarify that I'm still confused there. Weve all had a complaint with an incident like this or that all other said that it was included in that. Thank you, Mr. Mayor,

**MAYOR:** Commissioner Felder

**FELDER:** Thank you. This is regarding my documentation that I requested. My question is, how long will it take for. You or your staff. To provide me the documentation requested. Because lately, from my

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understanding, you've been behind. On submitting ORR'S and also other documentation that has been requested. From the city. So how long will it take?

**CITY MANAGER:** We have not been behind Commissioner on when this is presented. You have 72 hours to respond to that and then give them an expected time. You know, documents or we have those documents. So, we're not behind on any open records request. Um, but I'll get back to you this week. Um, I've talked to the team in the morning, and we'll try our best to get to you tomorrow. Tomorrow afternoon.

**Speaker 2:** Thank you. Thank you for you for responding. I'm only, um, repeating what you stated in an email to me. And I request the documentation, but I appreciate you putting this in 72 hours. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Just a point of clarification. The documents that Commissioner Felder has requested there would this. The order was based on what was submitted by both parties. And, of course, what came out of the hearing as well. So, I think each party exchanged documents. Uh, the complainant has the respondent's documents and vice versa. So, there are no additional documents other than what was submitted in preparation for the hearing, plus the testimony that came out at the hearing. And I know the board did some independent investigation, and I think that there may be some additional information that came out with open Those are included, but the bulk of the documentation is what both parties submitted. And that's what the board based its order on.

**MAYOR:** Understanding what we might say in the courtroom. So, there's information that both sides have. To exchange to make their arguments for or against. So right now.

**FELDER:** I asked the details because I do have those documents. But as I'm reading the findings of facts, for example, on number five complaint and filed supplemental information to support the original complaint on October 24th, setting forth additional credit card misuse allegations, including the respondent seated for 2023 and 2024. Travel budgets and receipts totaling \$3,964 were not turned in with expense vouchers. Now, based upon this statement, this is what the complaint said. But also in

several sections of this fact finding, it states that the city manager and city finance director provided these documentations. So, who came up with this total? Was it the complainant or was it you, the city manager, and the city manager? That is why I'm asking for the findings of fact that corresponds with each of these numbers one through 22.

**CITY MANAGER:** Okay. So, without any documents, I went through our staff request and like I said, would you request Commissioner, I'll get to you tomorrow. We'll just cut it like that. Thank you. Just a question. Right now, you. Get tomorrow.

**FELDER:** That aligns with the findings of facts, right?

**CITY MANAGER:** whatever email you sent. I'm going to go back and get the email from the finance director, and we're going to respond to that just because it's I can see it. We're all going back and forth right now.

**FELDER:** I don't want to go back and forth.

**CITY MANAGER:** Yeah, I'm saying so I just.

**FELDER:** Wanted to be clear because I'm going based upon what statement?

**CITY MANAGER:** Yeah. So, e-mail me.

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**FELDER:** I will. Email you, send you. I will email you. Thank you. Thank you, mayor. Thank you, mayor. Thank you chief. Um, I would.

**NELSON:** Like for us to look into having an internal audit on credit card use from an outside source, if possible. That way, we can clear up all kind of misunderstandings and see who's doing what to put to bed. All these rumors that everybody's doing this willy nilly with credit cards, which is not true. So, I would like to just ask for us to look into that as soon as possible.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** You, Mr. Mayor. Thank you. Before we move to another topic, we have a bit of housekeeping to do with the Board of Ethics. Uh, as you know, there was another complaint that was filed by Mr. Sean Sanders, and a new board was formed on November the 19th, 2024, in relation to that complaint. Five board members were selected on November the 19th, and two alternates were selected. Since that time, one of the original five has resigned from the board. When the hearing board and the first alternate moved up into that slot. Uh, now there's only one alternate left who is going to move up to position one. In terms of the alternates. Uh, so what has to happen now is we have to pull another name from the pool in order to fill the second alternate slot, but you have to have five board members and two into all of us at all times.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Now, the person that resigned, Mr. Martin Gray, he was replaced by Michael Hargrove. So, he goes into the pool. Miss Felicia Brown also resigned, and she was replaced by Marian Solomon. So, she goes into the pool. And Janelle Walker was one of the original pool members for this. Uh, she was one of the original members. So, um, those three names, Michael Hargrove, Mary and Solomon Games and Janelle Walker, uh, need to go into a cup and go, and one name needs to be pulled. That would be the second alternate. So, this pending complaint, and I think we have a copy with those names in them. Is that right?

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Madam clerk? All right. I just shake them up. And we will let the. Clerks pull it in. She pulled up The name Jene Walker. So, she would be the second alternate on this pending complaint versus the first quarter. I'm sorry. Earl Martin is the first alternate. Mr. Bussey moved back

into the five-person board. So would you call it the five person board in the alternative space? Yes. Sean Taylor. This is the board. Sean Taylor, Lorraine Regalis, Katherine Brinson, Tim Peacock and Now. Ever since then, the two alternates. Would be Earl Martin and Johnnie Walker.

**HOPKINS:** You know, I have one more question don't you have so many hours to file that.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Uh, ask me a question again, Commissioner.

**HOPKINS:** Don't you have so many hours filed complaints?

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** You have so many days to file it, right? It has to be filed within 90 days of the alleged unethical conduct.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** And so, the board will. Now, this is this is the second complaint. This is not the first one. This is the second Sanders complaint that was filed on November the 19th, 2024, um, alleging that, you know, there was. Some misuse or some questions regarding the use of the city auditorium that happened within the last 90 days.

**HOPKINS:** Is that all the complaints he had at the present time? We got another one.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Uh, I understand there may be another one that I have. I have to take a look at. Um, that was filed by Mr. Martin Gray. Uh, he was on the board at the time. He filed it against the board. Uh, and, of course, he can't file a complaint against himself, but I haven't actually seen it yet.

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Uh, so he filed that complaint allegedly on the night that he walked off. So, um, I, I don't I don't know what to make of that until I review it. And I hope to be able to review that tomorrow.

**HOPKINS:** That's against the whole board. That was against the old ethics board that.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** That's my understanding.

**HOPKINS:** And that's the only one we have left now.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** That's right. That's the only other one that's left.

**HOPKINS:** I thought there was one more. No, ma'am. Not to my knowledge.

**MAYOR:** All right. Thank you. Thank you.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. At this time, is mayor. We're moving to the Computer Information and Software System Upgrades update, which will be given by Mr. Patrick Sims for information and Technology.

**PATRICK SIMMONS:** Mr. mayor. Commissioners, I just want to give you a brief update on our tower technology. As you know, I serve as a project manager for that conversion. Just want to give you an update on my Waycross, GA app. Again, that is the best way to get your citizens to report issues. They can download it on the iPhone or the Android. Take pictures, upload it immediately. It automatically routes to the appropriate staff to get it taken care of. Whether it's the weekend, evening does not matter. We currently have it downloaded on 966 devices. We need more than that to be honest. Since September, our numbers really went up with four sessions. That's people that are looking at that reporting issues. Of course, that was during the hurricane time. So, they really benefited from during that time. So again, just encourage your constituents to download it. It doesn't cost them anything. Takes up very little space on your iPhone or their Android, but it actually helps them get things reported very quickly. The bulk of the technology we're currently in our financial

conversion process. We go live sometime. Probably late January or early February. Um, Greg's team, Mara and Mercedes and Hayley working daily with Tyler to get those. You know, it's almost like two different languages. So, trying to get everything converted from our old system to the new system, making sure all the terminology, all of our vendor IDs, all those things match the GLS coordinates. So, it's taking a lot of work. They've been attending some online training to get further knowledgeable about the program. Once we go live with financial conversion, we're moving to the fixed assets, purchasing some project accounting community improvement that will allow our code inspectors to things to make updates on the spot. We updated some of our equipment, laptops and things like that for staff, so they'll start rolling those out just as soon as we get it all converted. Utility billing will be the last because that's going to be the big one that's going the one that's really going to impact our customers, how things operate. So we'll probably move that later early spring if everything goes well and just again, just have to keep in mind our system that we currently have is very old, so it's takes longer to get it converted, but we're working hard to get those things done. Any questions? Comments on anything.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner. Any questions from the board? Thank you, mayor.

**HOPKINS:** I have one question. Who's the team that you have?

**PATRICK SIMMONS:** The team. So, there's almost two teams. There's a biweekly team myself, Greg Murphy, Mara Lake, Mercedes. Hailey. Manny sits on that too. But as far as like the day to day, the accounting terminology, and things like that, that's mainly Greg. It's immediate team and that's Mara, Mercedes and Hayley working on that day to day.

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**MAYOR:** Great. Thank you. Any other questions, Commissioner?

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Simmons. Next, Mr. mayor, we'll move to the charter changes and all.

**CITY MANAGER:** When we first went down this road, I didn't realize how out there the charter was, and I was trying to get everything to the commissioner's body for January, and it's going to probably be physically impossible because there's so much stuff to change. But I did call GMA and they did tell me about the rule in 1965 there and that certain item the body. I got to check with the city attorney. But they did tell me we could do those changes without going to the legislature. So, I'm going to talk to the city attorney tomorrow about this. This might be a better way to hit these immediate areas right now that need to be changed. And then the other areas that we can't change without legislation will move those items the next time they go into session. Hopefully we have that all together for y'all to take with y'all. It was just like I said, we had the biggest charter in southern, you know, southern regions. Its thing about GMA and it was impossible to get all this stuff done. Um, just alone. Uh, I will request, you know, initially I did ask. I had a board of citizens help me out with that one time, and we were against that, um, for whatever reason. Um, I do need some help. Um, and the citizens opinion would go a long way to that process, especially when you look at, uh, the codes and certain other things. I can't use the staff because, you know, right now we are going through a major audit. Um, um, and like Mr. Sims just mentioned about that team maybe doing a great job with audit. We should be finished this year. So we qualify for those additional grants and funding, um, with the audit conducted. Um, so the thing here I'm asking, and this just goes down to what that what the act means in the home rule and charter changes. And like I said again, GMA said this to me and told me it's probably the best way to approach changing the charter because we had so much in there that's outdated and not accordance with, um, some regulatory tour guides, but I will get with the city attorney. We'll go through this to see exactly what can be done. Um, but what I am the question. Um, like I said, I pulled back from having the citizens help out with that. Um, and I don't have the staff to do a separate committee. So I'm asking the commissioners again. Um, you know, if you could get select volunteers to help out with that, just to go through it and, um, just to get simple

recommendations. I mean, we, as we all know, uh, some of our code, that part is definitely outdated and that will make this transition much faster. Um, and I would like to meet with them, um, just weekly moving forward, all that stuff done and then hopefully have all, all that, um, collaborated and tasked to you for the, uh, April, um, city retreat at that point in time.

**MAYOR:** Just a question. This goes along with the same thing with ethics. When individuals Is saying the district commissioners call for a name. Do they need to call for someone from their district or any citizen?

**Speaker 7:** Uh, I think I think a little different I will let the city attorney answer that question.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Yes. Um, I did look that up over this past weekend. And as it turns out, the, uh, the city code provides that the mayor and city commissioners shall select citizens of the of the city of Waycross who shall be taxpayers. It does not say that they have to reside within the district where the Commissioner is from. Um, and so that I mean, that's the answer to that question. Any citizen who is registered to vote. Um, I think, um, logically, uh, you may want to pick someone from your district so that the city is fairly represented through all five districts. You wouldn't want, uh, 12 people in one district. Uh, you know, seven people in one district or two districts. So logically, it makes sense to do that. But the code does not actually require it.

**MAYOR:** I know our code is very general and ambiguous. And then when we put something in there to try to be specific, we might hit the water a bit. But I was questioning that because I know once you open the floor for choosing someone to be on the code crew, that's going to help look at the codes and



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ordinances. I didn't know whether or not we wanted to have people representing each one of the districts. Or would they be representative of multiple people may come from a different or the same district?

**CITY MANAGER:** Yes. I think when we started that the first time, it was, um, most of the citizens were concerned about what they called growing and getting better. So, you know, ideally, I would you know, I'm not saying pick anybody. Whoever shows up, they show up and we'll make some parameters. Um, I did I do want certain people, uh, Downtown Development Authority, um, have certain people that interact with us every day because it affects them as well. Um, to kind of sit down and talk about those things because we are constantly, um, our chart is constantly going against growth. Just be honest. And, um, they mentioned that quite numerous times to me. So some people I would request help us out with. I'm just making this request because like I say, it is, um, it can't be done by one person.

**MAYOR:** Um, what number of people are you looking at trying to create a committee or a collaboration with?

**CITY MANAGER:** I think it needs to be, um, key stakeholders. Um, I try to meet, um, I've been able to meet with the acting county manager more than ever. You In my first year and a half year, and we've been collaborating on a lot of things because, um, of course, you all know this our policies didn't line up with the county in no way means it needs to if we're going to make the county city growth. Um, so I think it will be, um, her right now, today, my permanently, of course, the development authority of the downtown authority people that and some other key stakeholder and somebody from the school board. Um, some of those people that's mentioned in the comprehensive plan, because that's part of it as well. Um, and then any other citizens that show up who really want to add value to the conversation, I just think we'll get it done much faster. Um, we're moving at a good pace before and then, um, I was told to stop. I'm just saying, if we want to get to a point now, if the commission has time to review on their own and just come back to me, let me know what they want to change, we can do that too. But like I said, there's a lot of stuff in there that need to be updated or removed and it will be easier on me, um, as the city manager, to do it that way.

**MAYOR:** But the reason I asked Mr. City Manager for that number is because I was wondering if you had a maybe a ceiling and a floor regarding the number of people you wanted in the room. But now I understand the composition. You want it to be a cross-section of, as you said, key stakeholders. So, when you say that I understand you made mention of authorities or boards, that kind of thing. But I'm saying amongst the citizenry, I'm asking regarding the commission, and they're deciding as far as someone they may want to add, as you say to the conversation.

**CITY MANAGER:** I'm open to whatever. Mr. Mayor, like I said, just we need to do it. And it's like, I understand why it hasn't been done now because, you know, it probably falls on my office and simply doesn't get done. And I just want to get it done because I think it'll make us as a city transition better. And I use certain things. I've been talking to the city secretary and people wanting to buy land. Um, you know, we are known for not zoning properly, you know, and certain things. And when I say zoning, I mean, nobody's going to come here and add our lots right now and put a big house there. You know, and we're really restrictive on growth, you know, and we really got to turn the corner on that stuff.

**MAYOR:** You know, so strangely and just me interrupting you for one moment. One of my concerns is when we say that because the commission only votes on what's brought to them about, say, for instance, if there is a rezoning or re changing of something that goes through the zoning and the planning commission, then it comes to us. But we have someone who sits on that board who then in turn will either have our community improvement director will come and make a presentation to us regarding the new zoning or the new area. But until such time as that, we as a commission don't make those go food. We basically just affirmed what has already been approved by that report.

**CITY MANAGER:** Yeah, well, that ties in to just the perception of what the zoning board. And like I said, just in some of our ordinances, they contradict, you know, like, um, the trailer, certain things, you

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know, that other cities are doing to promote growth. Um, definitely. We got a shortage of housing. I'm seeing housing right now. We're talking about today. Um, we definitely got to make our charter, our ordinance and code section more friendly to people to come here to get homes and houses, because we are drastically behind on those things. And, um, we asked them to come in this weekend because of the bicentennial. Uh, they're asking numerous questions. And, um, it's hard to answer those questions because, you know, it's going to seem negative, you know? So, I mean, it's just a small facet of the whole thing. I just, you know, um, back to my initial, um, slide just about, um, tackling the infrastructure needs and building a strong workforce. All those things we've got to change our way of thinking. You know, we push a lot of stuff away. Um, in the past, for reasons I don't fully understand. Um, but right now, we need to pivot a different direction and start being really open to, you know, all forms of housing, you know? Um, and change the other rules, too. I have discovered other cities, um, knocked down properties. Um, they're building their charter where you have a certain amount of time for the owner that property to pay it off or, or it gets, you know, it comes back to the city, and they resell it. You know, so there are ways to do things. You know, I just want to make sure we kind of get to that point as well.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner Bennett

**BENNETT:** Um, I want to ask a question. I don't know if this is. Directed to. The city manager or the city attorney. Okay. What happened to my second person? This is a different case. So why wasn't my second person entered into this pool?

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Who was your second person? Uh.

**Speaker 4:** Reverend Malone.

**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Malone. Oh, okay. Well, um, the Reverend Malone was disqualified from the initial complaint, as you recall. Yes. Um, and Mr. Nelson took up that complaint. And then during the hearing, uh, the Sean Sanders complaint, uh, came in actually doing the hearing, and there was a request that it be, um, that it be included as evidence. Okay. Uh, against, uh, Commissioner Felder, um, and whoever had a conflict of interest with the initial complaint. Okay. Also had that conflict of interest with the supplemental evidence as well. So, he was he was disqualified again.

**BENNETT:** Okay. All right. Back to you. Mr. Mayor.

**MAYOR:** Thank you.

**CITY MANAGER:** And if I can, Mr. Simmons, has he forgot to mention an update to the update?

**PATRICK SIMMONS:** Just a small update, Commissioner Hopkins. You asked me about my team, and I forgot two people who are very important, and they will probably get me tomorrow. But that's Nancy Davis. She's very vital for utility billing. And also, Ali Lindsay and community improvement. I just wanted that on the record because they're probably watching. Thank you.

**CITY MANAGER:** Okay Miss Mann, that concludes the charter change updates. Does anybody have any further questions on that? Okay. Uh, next, Mr. mayor, we're moving to direct bills. And what I like to do right now is if you go, as I mentioned, we're going to lose, uh, Chief Edmonds and Mr. Smart here this month, and they've been very vital to the city for many years, and we appreciate their service. But of course, they've always taken in the head. And, um, we're going to have, uh, two gentlemen fill in. I wasn't sure I know you know, both of them. I want to introduce them tonight, um, to the body. For those that don't know, I know Commissioner Roberts does not know them. So, um, we're going to have, I guess, acting chief, uh, Jim Blackburn come up on Friday, and I know y'all know chief already, but

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everybody knows him. Good evening. Yeah. And then, Matthew, um, come on up, man. I'm not sure if Matt. Matt. He's. He's fairly new here. Um, he's come off the ground. Uh, came from up north and running really hard. Um, really? You know, Jane was doing a great job down there in math. I just took the torch and kept it going if you know even harder. So, um, a little bit younger than James. So, let's see what that is going for that he's going to do a great job filling in. Um. Oh yeah. Yeah. Let me see you start calling.

**CITY MANAGER:** As soon as possible. Um, yeah. Cheap and Mr. Smart will turn his headphones over next week, so they'll be unavailable for calls for anybody. At that point in time. These gentlemen will have those calls. Answer those calls. Um, moving forward. Um, y'all want to say anything? No. No. Okay. So, um, thank you, gentlemen. And with that, Mr. Mayor, you know, I can y'all in a different session, I talked about, um, the 10%, but let me go back. So, we did have to go out and put these jobs out. Um, so I'm going to leave my there for about 4 to 5 days to see if anybody else comes in. Uh, if not, um, we got two outstanding individuals here that can do the job right now, but legally, we got to put them out for bid and see and see what happens. So, no jobs are out as well already. Um, I didn't well. So um, but for me, this promotion increased policy and the reclassification promotion policy, um, we, um, when gentlemen fill in, y'all did this for the, uh, the directors, the city manager for a long time, they got 10% bump. Um, once. If they get selected for that position, then they receive, um, that grade. For that grade, they get another bump. Um, put him as director and they'll come in, um, at the, at the, the lowest range and the lowest paid director at that time. And then we'll build in, uh, degrees and all that stuff to up to 70. So, um, I know I can't talk specific, um, as far as names, I'm just talking about policy right now. Um, but this fits, um, another individual as well. I know we can't say names, but that's going to apply to him as well. He's the director. So, you know, same policy. So I'll pause Apologies for any question or comments on those.

**HOPKINS:** I'm I would like to make a comment,

**MAYOR:** Commissioner Hopkins.

**HOPKINS:** Um, Mr. Blackburn, your dad would be very proud of you. I'm glad you came forward. And. And I hadn't met the other gentleman. But I heard good things about you from James. So I'd like to welcome both of y'all on board. Thank you for filling in for these positions. Mr. mayor, thank you.

**CITY MANAGER:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Next. Mr. mayor, we're moving to, um, the employee handbook. Adoption. Uh, I emailed the handbook. Um, it did come out late. I thought it went out Friday. Didn't come out yesterday. So, I will pull back my recommendation for adoption today. Um, but I still want to go over the main changes in the handbook. Uh, all the areas highlighted in green have been updated to due to commission approval changes over the years. Um, or they are, um, they had to be changed because the federal state laws. And that's what you're going to see in the handbooks. And it's highlighted in green. Uh, the yellow areas are requested to be removed. Um, not that many in there, but when requested to be moved, it's something we either don't do anymore or was against state policy. And then, um, the arrows in gray need clarification. And it really only about three areas in need of clarification. I'm going to talk about the main one. And that's going to be executive contract employees. I mentioned before um, we did not define what an executive was. Uh, I did go back and look at that and talk to GMA. And of course, the executive was, you know, as you go up the levels of, of, uh, of government, it would be yourself as the mayor or myself because we have authority, uh, for the city. Uh, that being said, it still is in conflict with a lot of portions of the handbook. So, although it's not highlighted in green, uh, in the copies you have and request this be removed from the handbook. And this will. This will tie in with the hand. I'm going to go down next to the, uh, the credit card policy because as you read the credit card policy in the handbook, it prescriptive, it specifically describes, uh, commissioners, the mayor and myself as being accountable to, to the credit card policy. So what I would do, like I said, I know you're going to get the, um, the actual handbook yesterday. Now. Uh, most of the

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changes in there. Um, like I say, state stuff. They got to be changed. You cannot not just adopt it because it has to be changed or the state regulation. Um, the last time that we adopted the policy was 2021. Um, so some of this credit card stuff was already in there. Um, like I said, the only thing I'm asking now is to remove that because it is in conflict. Um, with the rest of our regulations. At the same time, in the charter, which specifically designates an executive that will be yourself, mayor of me. Um, in the in the genre. So I think that would remove that conflict there, because it is a little bit confusing as it jumps around from, uh, elected official, elected official, then, uh, executive. So and I followed up any question on that for me.

**MAYOR:** Just to the attorney, I'm thinking possibly we can do something parenthetically, whereas we when we say that it has in parentheses the actual, I would say, more specific language than what we're having now. Obviously, there seems to be a conflict in understanding what the language and the lingo is by reading the document. So just for that clarity. That's correct. Mr. Mayor, I've suggested to the manager that, uh, we use, uh, strikethroughs, uh, from the old language as it appears in the book as well as charter changes. And then we, uh, Indicate what the new provision should be, and he has some suggestions, but we actually need to put the wording in there. And so you can have it, uh, before you, um, using strike foods and add ins, just like you might see, uh, legislation that comes down that has been amended, you see what the old version looked like, and then it struck through, and then you see what the new language, uh, is proposed to be. So we're going to do it that way, and it's going to take us a little bit of time. But I think that's the best way to do it, because everybody will be on the same page.

**CITY MANAGER:** And it's been in the handbook. If you look at the notes section, it's kind of already in there. We made changes in there. The charter's totally different. Like you said, that's a whole different scenario.

**MAYOR:** Commissioner Hopkins.

**HOPKINS:** Um, since the city managers not quite. Ready, you just have to say that I make a motion that we talk about it later. And we can't put it on the agenda tomorrow night M because he had to make me do that. He suffered that. So that's what he said.

**MAYOR:** To postpone until a later time.

**HOPKINS:** Yeah. You can't you. Can't vote on that. But I think that's what we can do in June.

**MAYOR:** So, we're just going to find out. You brought up the bill tonight based on what was being requested in June.

**CITY MANAGER:** So, like I said. When you look at the handbook, when they do go through it a few times, I went back and looked at everything again and made some more changes. It's definitely what they lost or has to change. You can't just not change that. It's got to change. And that's mainly going to be highlighted in the green. Um, and then the yellow, um, as we, they're going to be asked to remove. What does that mean. The items, it was removed. It was some definitions and some things we don't do. Uh, it's a lot of it's a lot of, Um, uh, references in there to, uh, really old stuff that you might have done some years ago. These be brought out or it just doesn't make sense. So think about 17 responses to those. But the main thing for tonight's purpose, um, because I didn't highlight that, I didn't highlight this. And because it needs to be out of date, because it is contradicting to the rest of the policy. And with that kind of leads into the next part is the credit card cost update, um, which I'll go to next. So you don't have any more questions.

**MAYOR:** About this, just trying to find out what were you desirous of here? Well, I.

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**CITY MANAGER:** Thought I thought the, um, I thought the handbook that went out, um, with the packet and did not. And I sent out.

**MAYOR:** Yes. So we can move forward quickly. Yeah. It gives me an opportunity to put it before the commission. And I don't know if we want to use the table because it's not it's not on the agenda. It's basically a work session item that is being discussed that has not made it to an agenda. Once it makes it to the agenda, it has to be ratified or. At least voted on at the beginning of the meeting to say that it remains on. Otherwise, they can say, well, your agenda. With the exception of this particular thing, and then the agenda could be approved. With that item. Well. You can if it if it shows up on your motion.

**CITY MANAGER:** Any further questions?

**MAYOR:** No. I have no questions. I'm basically just repeating what you were saying so.

**CITY MANAGER:** The commission can hear. I understand. Next, Mr. mayor, we're going to move on to the credit card policy. Um, and what I did, I, Mr. Johnson, made a reference. I did go back and, um, one of the first requests made for me when I got here was to do a ten-year audit. Independently. I've been doing that. Um, so I do have all the credit card information. Um, I went back 14 years to capture all the commissioners, current commissioners in their travel and stuff like that. So I do have that. Um, well, we're putting it together. I'll provide that to the commission another time. Um, which will seem to be, um, because, you know, at that time it was different training and travel dollar amounts with the years and you'll see, um, what training was conducted, how much we made during that training and then what was paid outside of that training. Um, back to discovery learning. Um, you know, commissioners had different opinions about what traveling training was. Um, so, um, you can clearly see that in, in this document. Um, about how we manage credit cards. So, um, it's hard for me to put a firm policy in place. Uh, I did go back and ensure that everybody who has a credit card, um,

outside of the commission body, um, go ahead and, um, resign for the policy. Um, we signed for their credit cards, and, uh, and he's going to talk to me about the policy. So, um, and we are also changing our procedures, at least on my level with the direct. I mean when the commissioners or how we process their training and travel. So, um, uh, it's nothing like super-secret. You just need to, um, we don't get the receipts in, you know, I'm about to. I'm going to do a better job by the question of seats. Um, because once you go past 2 or 3 weeks, your receipts, you know, give them some time, stuff gets forgotten. So we have a lot going on, but I'll. I'll be more involved with that process moving forward. Um, to take all of us just any confusion about, you know, our spending here with credit cards. Um, what I did do and for the general public, I just want them to see, you know, they can see this on Facebook. Get to see our credit card policy. I did receive a question on what that policy was. Um, and for those watching this afterwards in the handbook, if they want to review it, uh, the handbook will be on the website tomorrow. Um, but it will be a draft version. Um, just so you can see, you know, what is going to be the adopted version for 2021 with the. Changes. Um, is pinned. So this way we are clearly transparent to the public on how we manage our credit cards. So and just kind of discusses the policy there.

**MAYOR:** I have. A question. Yes. And the question is regarding credit cards, I think the last time that and mayor signed it, signed a document that said that we had to sign a document. Was there not. Yes.

**CITY MANAGER:** That would come to you so. Mr. Yes, that would come to you. So I didn't want to overload this meeting. You got a lot already.

**MAYOR:** Just the reason I brought that in because most of the commission now is, has not been exposed to having to sign off on anything before they receive their cards. I think they all received a card, and then they just stole your card.

**CITY MANAGER:** But the new commissioners just I mean, they got they signed off on the cards. So we'll make sure everybody has to. But I just want to make sure the public is fully understood what the

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policy is and what we're. Trying to do for transparency. I'm just going to let you sit for a while so everybody can kind of see. Um, and I have reviewed this with my finance department and what they should be doing. Um, like I said, one of the things is with receipts. Um, you got to make them. We got to us got to save them differently in the system. Instead of putting them all together, we got to make them different. So that's a lot of discovery. Learning. We're going to be better about this. Um, it's based on the findings by the report. So we've made a pivot already to fix the problems that we had. So once again, for those watching this, this credit card policy, it will be on the website tomorrow morning. So everybody can you view it. We'll have questions about it. This kind of discusses the violations Or improper use. And once the answer is watch, I'm flipping through it kind of fast, but this will be a video on Facebook and YouTube for your viewing at a later date as well. And that's once again to be on our webpage tomorrow. And this is for Mr. Mayor. By now we had everybody signed resign. This although some individuals had signed before. Um, we had the team once again, um, uh, driving this initiative. But when they signed for their Christmas bonus checks, they got a quick briefing on credit card issues for those that had credit cards. So and as Mr. Simmons has mentioned, and also the finance director, uh, it's a great team now. And they're doing a lot of things to make sure we compliant regulatory guidance.

**CITY MANAGER:** And Mr. Mayor, I know on the agenda it says city manager contract, but it's supposed to mean the. City. Manager report. At this time, and I'm going to it's not going to be city manager at this time, but it's going to be moved to my report. And on that time, I'll talk about some other expenses that we've discussed through my report. Um, the next one. Uh, it's going to be for you is on your desk you have a, uh, a GDOT MOU Can y'all see that? This is for the Ossie Davis Overpass. As you already know. Um, as you already know, um, do that. Pushes us to do a lot of things. Um, that's a priority for them. And we had unfortunately, we had some utilities that's in the

midst of that project. Um, for the overpass and, um, Initially requested they do so. They were going to do the project anyway. They have to do that stuff anyway. And of course, they refuse to do it. Um, and we end up doing it. Correct, Mr. Briggs? When I say that.

**CHARLIE BRIDGES:** Well, we haven't done it yet.

**CITY MANAGER:** We haven't done it yet, but they want to make us pay for it. Um, but they're going to make us pay for it. But at the same time, it'll be put in their project scope. And as you see there, the amount is, uh, I think it's 88,000, maybe. Yes, sir. Yeah, 88,000. Um, one good thing about this, about letting them do that for us. It won't be more than that. You know, they just stuck to that price. Um, we already estimate if we were to do, um, without them doing it for us, it would be way more than that. Plus, we would be working around their schedule as well. Um, and we just don't have the personnel to do that, facilitate that? Uh, it's actually saving us money, to be honest with you. So, um, um, I look a look a certain way, but it is, you know, how they how they how they perform. So, um, we'll pay them. They'll move our mobile utility is going with the project from there. So the MoU. I'm just asking, did I. I believe I can sign the MOU, uh, but I wanted the commission to know what was going on with that project. Do we have any questions on that resolution? It will be a resolution.

**MAYOR:** So basically. We can say that or just be ready to say be. Ready to turn it over to you to sign your name on it.

**CITY MANAGER:** Correct. All right, Miss Smith. No question on that. Uh, we're moving to, uh, the mini privileged license renewals that we have, and we see that we have about 23 at that time of the year. And the third would be the honor of going over that tomorrow. And she reads all those laws. Thank you. Uh, we have no proof of licenses. We have some wonderful ordinance and this ordinance. Um, we're supposed to do it, uh, a while back. Um, but it dropped off, um, into some, um, due to the storm, um, when the storm came, so we couldn't get it back on the agenda. So, um, I think we can do it twice. It just, you know, you got to read twice on tomorrow's meeting, so we'll do that then. Um, we have no proposed resolutions, and then we'll turn it over to the city attorney for his report.

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**HUEY SPEARMAN:** Uh, I don't have anything else, Mr. Mayor.

**CITY MANAGER:** Uh, Mr. Mayor, I move on to my report, and what I want to do is, uh. And this is more for the new commissioner. Uh, there was some questions asked about, uh, the financial, um, documents. Uh, you know, I throughout the budget process, um, that was the question about updating the financial documents. We never really got the feedback from that. So I did make some adjustments on my own working with my department team. Um, so commissioners and mainly Commissioner Robertson. You get this in your pocket, you know. So twice a month because you get it every working session. I then sent out this first slide on the auction weeks. So, I sent out every Friday. I sent that out also with my credit card information and also with the daily report that you get the report every day. Um, so those are the things you get in that packet, which you will see. Um, I would say we add some stuff to this and that's kind of, uh, I'm going to go I'm going to go by these accounts one by one so everybody can be understanding what's in these packets. Um, this is all the funds, the general fund revenue. And the next slide. And everything is up through the month of November, and then it goes to the other water and sewer funds, the stormwater funds, which means reserve funds, and then starts getting into each department. So, like I say this is it's your, your packet. So, uh, On every working session. Eventually you get this in your packet for review. And then, like I said, I give you that first document. I give that to you every other week. So, you should always have access to the financial documents of the city. Then it moves into the hotel motel fund. And once again, you get this every two week. Um, it's required for me to give it to you every once a month. Um, accordance with the charter. And then you get the spa tax. Um, 2014 Spa templates in this class. The original class. Count moving slow, but, uh. And then it goes catching up, kind of catching up, and then it goes into the auditorium, fund our insurance funds, our workers compensation fund, and our retirement fund. And

then local option sales tax report. And then we got some charts at the end here that kind of show you the years. We always try to go back five years just to show you comparisons. And this is mainly our SPLOST. And then it goes into our SPLOST accounts again. And then the five years of our hotel motel tax report. And then it breaks down further into the expenses of our motel hotel report. And then it goes into our treasury bills. Uh, then it goes back into the auditorium for all the expenses. And then it breaks it down line by line item for who used auditorium, how much it cost. And it goes into some other, uh, spots, uh, park expenditures and. And it kind of covers all the parts, um, to year end. How much money is in the parks, how much we spent. And that's really the end of that document. Um, at this time, Mr. Mayor, I just want to say that I know there's been questions about, um, you know, about not seeing the financial report. Like I said, it's in your packets every two weeks, and that's in that master list every other week. Um, and I also send, like I said, I send my credit cards now every Friday if I use my credit card, which I haven't used, I think this is what the commission has asked for. So, we're trying to, um, provide it for them and for the new commission. Like I said, um, you get email, um, you get this email, and they bring you a hard copy. So, you, you know, you always have access to it to review it. Um, if you don't you don't want a hard copy of this, let us know and we'll just email it to you. Uh, at this time, Mr. Mayor, that's all I have on my city report.

**MAYOR:** Thank you. Do we have an executive session? This will be for. This is the personnel. So, Mr. Mayor. So, we have a motion to go into executive session for personnel from our commissioner Nelson, the second from our commissioner Hopkins. Please take a roll call vote, district one- Yes. district two- yes, sir, district three-yes, district four-yes and district five-yes. We're now in executive session.