



**MINUTES
WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION
BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING**

**WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION CHAMBER
(FIRST FLOOR OF CITY HALL)**

**TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025
3:30P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Public Hearing on the FY2026 Budget of the Commission of the City of Waycross was held on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. Mayor James called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm. Those in attendance were, Commissioners Katrena Felder, Shawn Roberts, Alvin Nelson, and Mayor Pro Temp, Sheinita Bennett.

A. Invocation Mayor Pro Temp, Sheinita Bennett

Invocation led by Mayor Michael-Angelo James

B. Pledge of Allegiance

II. READING OF NOTICE: City Clerk

Read by Marquis Nixon, Assistant City Clerk

III. CALLED MEETING: *SEE DISCUSSION NOTES*****

A. BUDGET PRESENTATION

1. Mayor and Commissioners
2. Public Response

IV. LAST CALL and/or ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

V. PUBLIC REMARKS ON OFFICAL ACTION

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There was a motion made by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Mayor Pro Temp, Sheinita Bennett All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 4:47pm

CITY OF WAYCROSS

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

ATTEST:

Jacqueline Powell
JACQUALINE POWELL, City Clerk



*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

MAYOR: We want to thank our Mayor Pro Temp for calling for our invitation. And at this time, we look to our city clerk to read us the notice from our newspaper, and then we'll move into our meetings for the budget.

ASST, CITY CLERK: Thank you, you, Mr. Mayor. Public notice. City of Waycross, Georgia. Proposed budget submitted to the City Commissioners for Fiscal Year 2026. May 20th, 2025, 3:30 p.m. 417 Pendleton Street, City Hall. The purpose of this commission meeting is the submission of the commission of the proposed budget for their consideration. All citizens of Waycross are invited to attend. Handicapped citizens requiring assistance to attend the meeting should make the request to the City Manager's office. Telephone number 2872912. Back to you, Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. At this time, we're looking to our presentations to be done through our city manager and our budget director.

Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

CITY MANAGER At this time, Mr. Mayor. I will start the presentation. As stated, I will hand off to the finance director. At some point, we tried to keep the slides to face the slides consistent from last year. We did change a few things because this was this budget. Um, we were able to move around. So, I kind of discuss that as we go through. And then once I get done with the slides, we'll move into the actual budget book this year. Um, we also made some changes there from the previous year. And then the finance director will come behind me and actually hit the Excel spreadsheet slides at the end of the presentation. So, with that, Mr. Mayor, this will be the first presentation. And uh, this year I want to go start with the quick wins and future games. Uh, this is actually my second year, um, doing the budget coming in. And I am really, you know, I say this in full transparency, excited about this budget. Um, a few things have changed, and I mentioned that throughout the presentation. Um, what? The team did a great job putting it together. Uh, definitely. Once again, uh, through the finance department and Ben's integration and Information Systems department and now directors. Everybody gave proper input. Um, you know, proper intent. And they met, uh, my goals of some budget savings, which I'll cover here in a second. So, we're very excited about this, um, big picture. First budget. We did increase the overall budget. Um, that's a big thing. That was the goal, um, from last year to kind of be in line with our theme this year of divesting and divesting from practices and procedures and programs that don't bring value, uh, to the city of Waycross and the investment in those same services, programs and procedures that bring value to the city of Waycross. So, um, once again, that intent was met. That intent also lines up with the priorities of the commission and the mayor. Um, so once again, everything's online. Online. Everything builds on, um, everything else, like a house being built by bricks. So very excited about that. So I'll go into the slides, Mr. Mayor. Um, and now pause at a certain point for questions during overall presentation. So once again, we did lower the overall budget. At the same time, we increased revenue, and that increased revenue is due to a lot of contributing factors. Some of the main ones being definitely our security department. So, our security center, city clerk and you'll see the actual numbers here. But we increased business license compliance. Um, so when I got here, it was probably like 20, 20% at that time out of the 415 identified businesses. Um, then in my second year, we may have got the 50%. Um, I think right now we're about 82% in compliance with all our new businesses and some of that, um, why we haven't reached 100 yet is because some of those businesses, uh, may have departed, and we're still trying to figure that out as well. And then some of those businesses who, uh, thought they were grandfathered in some kind of way from business license. We're still trying to connect those dots for those big songs. But regardless of that, you're talking about going from 20% to almost 85%. That's a that's some great work by that department. So, I'm very pleased with them. Um, also, this is all to all the directors. And I cover this a little bit right here as well. I did get him a goal of finding 5% cost savings in their budgets. And, uh, of course they went way beyond that. And, um, some of this you already know. Um, we have definitely as far as workforce recruitment and retainment, and I'm

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

highlighting only a few things that were done by, by the directors. So, we saved a lot on salaries by combining positions. Um, we did that about, I think at least between public works, um, I guess fire to a certain degree, um, forced overtime. And who does what during those phases? Um, by about eight positions, I guess. Today I'm not sure. But yeah, we did a lot and I'm forgetting human resource. They play a part in this as well. As far as we have to figure out these dual descriptions, combine the stuff and then, you know, and those data. So um, that was the that was not initially a goal like I said, got together. Um, when I asked about our overall salary budget. Now the overall salary budget has not changed. I didn't want to be too far from that. Um, in case we have new hires or things of that nature. But, uh, as far as savings, they did a great, uh, great thing by kind of like looking at how we align, how we set up and just figure it out. We need this position. And can it be combined? Um, another highlight, which would be, would be the community investment. Um, uh, Mark's team, um, in the past, we only had one housing inspector. I think now soon we have two, we have two. So that's doubling the output. And we all know, um, how important it is to get these, these homes and businesses inspected, um, because our, our citizens on a time crunch in many cases. And this is going to double that capacity. And it's also saving us money again by kind of divesting from that one position and investing into other positions. So once again, great work by our directors all the time. This is more on the fire department and police department. I did ask them to look at our old-time music, and they really went in there and dug and dug into that. Um, in some cases, uh, some of our more senior people come in and assume duties and some of the people kind of save a little bit of money. Um, and this is all important in the end, we'll talk about the cola adjustment. We'll be asking for, um, in this presentation. So, uh, great work by the fire department. I believe y'all briefed on that during the retreat. Um, about some of his steps. Um, just. And that fuel adjustments. Uh, that's been our biggest cost since I've been here. Uh, some of it unwanted because, um, of the hurricanes. So, there were a few automatically. Uh, but because we moved to our system of kind of zones, um, that saves a lot of fuel. Now, that's what I just run around everywhere. So, we have a single purpose, single focus. And that's more towards public works and the police department to a certain degree. But they go out there and, um, they do a great job. And I see you got a little type of field, but we'll adjust that. But uh, big job on them. And then the last part, I would say, um, establish a long-term financial strategy. And that's more aligned with, um, looking at our sports t-Splost tier, uh, some other financial decisions the commission has made up with some other, um, decisions as far as rate increases and things of that nature. So that strategy is maintained. Um, sustained. It's going to do a lot for the city of Waycross if we can maintain a strategy. And my estimate for the next ten years is going to get a lot of comments during that time frame. So, I'm very excited about that. And that's kind of the quick win's summary. I just want to highlight those real fast. Um, prior to getting to the actual meat and potatoes of the financial brief, If you have any questions on this slide.

MAYOR: Commissioners, you have any questions from our city manager regarding the statement he made with the quick wins and future games. Mr. Roy, district two. No, sir. District three. No. And district five. No, sir. Thank you.

CITY MANAGER: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Commissioner. Uh, next we'll move. And this is the slide that you remember from last year. Now, the last financial brief, we had a lot more on here. Um, and I'm excited to kind of cut this slide down. So that means that we did achieve some of our goals from last year. Um, but certain things remain the same. So as far as our budget is concerned, external input is uncontrollable, although we save fuel. The fuel costs, it was going up. It's starting to go down now. So that might be a good indicator of the overall economy, but, um, it's still a cost to us regardless of that. Uh, utilities, um, our Grateful mission partners. Um, they provide interest to us. That's still a rising cost. Um, and so health care insurance that's still going up as you one knows, it's going to continue to be a cost. Labor and materials are still going up. And inflation, we're still kind of um, in a wage inflation war of some sort, um, just hiring and retaining quality people. I think offices are an internal investment. So, in some cases we bought some equipment, did not produce a return on investment and um, meters and things of that nature. So, um, we're still paying for those decisions. But I do have a feel-good story on the meters, which I'm going to go ahead and throw out that in the space. Um, so we come to a fishing, hopefully. But, um, we're excited about it as well. Still. So, uh, requested input decisions. So, the only we have this year is going to be, uh, the Cola, the 4% increase of cola. Um, we gave you an update in

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

April. Um, might call up 3% or 4%. I sat down with the finance department, and we feel comfortable that we can do the 4% increase. Once you look at your budget and you have updated budget books, we do have to add a few things from yesterday. Um, you will see that in there with the 4.0 Cola increase is um, it's not significant right now because that's the only main contributing factor that's going to be a large amount of money. And the finance director will go into detail about how much that 4% will actually cost, uh, for other departments. So, um, and I forgot to mention, Mr. Mayor, immediately following this presentation, we will have a link online with the budget. Um, we just made a few changes prior to this. And then if you have any recommendations today by the commission, I want to go ahead and add that as well. And then we'll post it today. It'll be a link on our website. And of course, it is mentioned in the newspaper ad. You can just reach out to me if you want a copy of the paper or you want to sit down and talk about it. And then definitely for those citizens who might be listening right now watching, um, we have a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a citizen's budget hearing coming up. I think it's June 3rd, I'm not mistaken. I might be incorrect about the date, but they can come there for the public hearing. And then we have another one. We adopt the budget. So, there'll be multiple meetings following this one for them to provide input. And also, they can reach out to the commissioners. Um, right now they're watching um, and get them or ask them questions. And then the commission and the mayor, I'll be available to you to make those changes if you receive them over the next few weeks. Uh, some of the budget internal input that we can control. Um, so, uh, still a big deal right now is when the commission graced us by providing that workforce birthday initiative that's still going strong right now for us for us, um, our workforce, even though they have birthdays, they don't invite the city manager. But, you know, that's fine. It's part of the game. But they really love that. And they're really thankful the commission providing that service. Um, Christmas bonuses went a long way last year. You know, it was hard times for a lot of people in the city of Waycross. Definitely some of our workforce. So that amount of money went a long way to provide some extra gifts for some of their family members. Uh, retirement benefits change. Um, we just started making those changes. Um, first year, starting to see some of that. But that was that was known. Identified. So not really a big deal. And of course, the cost-of-living adjustment. We had one last year, um, workforce pay raises. Um, there are some raises that's already built into the budget. We got a few more. We got to we got to do, um, and these are some of us, um, on the low end of the workforce. And in those cases, most of those are going to be I'm not sure that's percentages, but those will be some of our labor people. And some of those will do, um, pay raises of either getting additional training, um, or digital certificates and things of that nature or degrees, uh, workforce structural adjustments. I kind of mentioned this already. Once again, just great work by the directors, by making some adjustments in the workforce structure, uh, to save us overall on salaries and then make us more efficient. So, and then sustainment, maintenance. And this is a big deal. Um, I probably should put that on the uncontrollable, uh, as you got briefed yesterday, um, with the inflation and some things going on with some of our mission partners, um, help us maintain our streets and water and sewer costs went up, uh, cement costs went up. And we were having a harder time maintaining some of our, our roads and streets work. But with the overall financial strategy, I think that's going to level out in this couple of years. And with that, Mr. Mayor Paul, you see the magic number down there, 42 million, not down to 40 million.

Thank you.

MAYOR: Any questions from the Commissioner? Yes.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: May I have a question. You mentioned, um, changes that were made to the updated budget in comparison to the previous book you gave us where those changes are located. I didn't see where they were marked.

CITY MANAGER: Yeah. I'm going to send that to you all in a little bit. It's just training updated, but I think it's about \$7,500. Um, we did increase the training in the finance department. That was a recommendation by the audit. It kind of slipped through. So, I did increase their budget. Um, I think each department went up by \$1,000. Um, as far as training, so they can get this training that they need. Uh, we made a few adjustments in this department as well. As far as training, and I think that was really

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

about it right now. And then we went back and cleared up some errors. Um, some of the math was off. And we also went and added a table of contents. We adjusted the pages. Some of the pages was off, and then we had some misspellings in there. So, it was mainly, um, you know, misspelled words and stuff of that nature and those few changes. But as far as training. And, um, as we go along, we find anything else that might have got, uh, misinterpreted or need to be updated. Commission. Just let me know. We'll make those adjustments. Um, like I said, that was a that was a recommendation by the audit. I want to make sure that we captured that, um, because we do want to make sure because the finance, um, world changes so much. Um, that's a goal of mine to get them out to do more training, not just to the director, um, or definitely the clerks that work in the finance department. So.

MAYOR: That's good that we have that opportunity for the training necessary for our personal growth, but also for the growth of our community as a board. Uh, this is very good, actually, looking through it and noting that you did correct the typo and going through and doing them, and thank you for the content page. It makes it easier to find where things are located. So, we appreciate that. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Mr. Mayor. I have a follow-up question.

MAYOR: And Commissioner Felder said she has a follow up question.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Yes, I do. Thank you. You mentioned about, um, training and increase in training for employees. Um, what about the commission?

CITY MANAGER: So, the commission deems they want to change the training amount. They can. Um, we'll take a vote on commission, and we'll add that as well. Um, like I said, like I said, I know we're going to make some. That's all we need to post it yet. So, the commission deems they want to increase their training, um, travel. Um, we can take that concession right now. Um, after we do the budget presentation, and we'll add that as well. Very good.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Thank you.

CITY MANAGER: I'm going to move on next to the actual overall budget program. I'll try too at least. All right I think Everybody. Can see that in the audience. And like I said, Mr. Mayor, we tried to do something different this year. Um, we definitely wanted to. This will cover the actual budget, but also, we just wanted to give the citizens a true year in review of how the budget, um, how it impacts them and kind of highlight a few things, um, that each directorate did. And once again, this builds on the overall budget. So, a change from last year where we just had the Excel spreadsheet. Uh, also on this, I want to talk this whole presentation because we have 100, 101 pages, um, in this budget book, but I will stop on a few pages to highlight a few things. I just want to provide the commissioners like the meat and potatoes of this part of this. And then once we get to the back to the actual Excel spreadsheet, the numbers that they have, of course, then then the finance director will answer those questions. So, so of course you got the front, Mr. Mayor, move on to the next slide. Uh, I know You cannot see them, but you have updated copy in front of you. Copy. And for those who are watching, um, if you're having a hard time seeing this, my apologies. There is a lot of information. Um, hopefully you have a big enough TV to do that. But again, after this meeting, they will take that back. Mr. mayor, uh, if we get any additional recommendations right now, then we'll make it tonight. And first thing tomorrow morning, we'll post a link with the updated version of the budget.

MAYOR: And according to what I believe you've documented and placed inside of our budget group, there was a scheduling that you utilized from the Georgia municipal Association.

CITY MANAGER: Correct.

MAYOR: And it's the date for that actual dispensing of the link to the community as well as to us. So, it was the 22nd. So, you're going to actually be a couple of days earlier. So that's it. Thank you.

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

CITY MANAGER: And the table of contents as requested by the commission. Um, and this kind of moves into some catching up to make sure. And it's kind of this is the first slide. Just kind of highlight who we are, what we do. Um, throughout the presentation you're going to see a mission statement and the vision statement voted upon by the commission two years ago. It has not changed. Uh, some of the things we added this year, um, was a letter from our merchants and a letter from our mayor just kind of discussing, um, just everything in a broad context of what's going on with the city of Waycross and how the budget affects, uh, those citizens. And I won't read it word for word. Um, Mr. Mayor, you wrote that yourself, so you know what it says. Um, and, um, so for those who may be watching, I live a few seconds for you to read it, but once again, we have this posted pretty soon. And that way our citizens can read the letter from the mayor. Uh, just discussing the highlight or airplane view of the city, um, and what's going on financially as well as a year in review, but not just what we did with the budget, but what we did is a group in totality. Over the last year, we've had a lot of a lot of events going on, a lot of commissions that had a lot of events going on. So, it kind of highlights those things. And next, Mr. Mayor, um, now we have got this from another city, and I always give respect where it's due about just making sure that pictures say a thousand words. Um, I know we've had some questions here recently about, um, the city's involvement with citizens. And I just think this is, this was a, um, a great adoption by ourselves to kind of show our citizens because everybody doesn't really follow social media sometimes. And then just be honest with you. A lot of these events, we don't have the great numbers. Sometimes we have a lot of numbers. Um, sometimes we don't. So, throughout the presentation, you're going to see, uh, just seeing the commission, the directors, the city in action for all citizens? The next, Mr. Mayor, is a message for me, and mine kind of goes a little bit farther, um, from your message, in collaboration with some of the thoughts of the commissioners that I kind of obtained over my time here, uh, the, the, the vision and the mission statement. Again, it kind of discusses the priorities that we voted upon my arrival. Um, our ten-year plan, um, what we're doing to get there and a few other things. So, I'll try to keep it simple. Like I said, we're trying to keep it simple for our citizens. Uh, but I thought it was important that we put these types of documents in here, um, so they can know, um, with the mayor being the kind of the face of the city and then the city manager kind of being the operational leader of the city as far as day to day. Um, here's some pictures again. Uh, next, Mr. Mayor, we're moving to, uh, the city commission, and we tried to, uh, um, I know we went to the. I want to confuse people. Now, this is showing the districts. I know we most of our maps now show the zone coverage. I don't want to confuse anybody. So, this shows the districts and not the zone coverage that we get. They get every day. Council districts, who they are, uh, the locations and then kind of talking about the American Commission's guiding principles and we're kind of hit on those, um, in a few seconds. But some things that we picked up on, um, speaking with the commission, uh, over the years, um, of course, and I, I'll talk about a few right here because, um, most of our commissions are really striving for economic development, um, you know, getting businesses here, helping businesses get here, getting jobs here, uh, especially those commissions we have we have, uh, business districts, uh, connecting citizens to parks and recreation highlight that real fast. So, we have three parks that are currently being renovated and, um, right now, the projected date, um, being conservative is set for July. But as we all know, things can happen. Um, that's the projected date right now. Uh, but that's one big thing. The commissioner's getting those parts redone, uh, through the commissioners have a lot of input on their specific parts. Um, so we'll be getting just so everybody knows, uh, two additional splash pads, and those parks will have, um, restrooms at them, uh, moving forward, uh, on that note and go back to the overall financial strategy. Um, in this class, um, the city will be, uh, collecting \$300,000 out of those, uh, hard earned tax dollars from our citizens and take that money to apply to the rest of the parks. So, I know some of the commission has plans and desires to do, uh, upgrade to other parts. And I know we're talking about that at a later date. Um, with that money we try to pull out this year and then, um, if everything if it's a case where we order stuff, we'll go ahead and order it. I know, order some stuff right now, but if it's a big fix, I just ask the commission and we kind of think about the weather, um, hurricane season and then right into the winter season. We might not be able to start until sometime early next year. Just a consideration. And then just, uh, you know. Of course, uh, leading with calls and focus on infrastructure. And again, that's the city commission. And actually, Mr. Mayor, um, and some of these recent pictures, but we wanted to highlight, um, some of the things that the Commission does. Uh, of course, we're

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

talking about infrastructure projects that we do, um, hurricane relief. Uh, all the commission was out, um, doing these two hurricanes, helping our citizens. Um, and this this is tied to the budget because all this had a cost to it. Um, the park stuff, um, recognizing the memory of Sergeant Sanders feeding the homeless, all these things. And I see a cost to the budget. It might not necessarily be funding a monetary, but sometimes it's just time. And time is the input of the budget.

MAYOR: All right. There's a question from the commissioner or comment.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Yes, question. Thank you, Mayor. This goes back to, um, page six, um, of the budget regarding the map that is shown. This is the 2011 map, correct. Of the districts. This is current.

CITY MANAGER: It should be current.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Thank you.

CITY Manager. mayor. The next slide is going to be the city in brief. And this is time of collaboration. And this was kind of spearheaded by, uh, the Village Integrations team. This highlighted everything is going well here and way across the swamp. Um, everything we have, we bring to the community, it highlights the wonderful city. The way cross is, um, for those who might not know. And then there's some data and some stats as far as, uh, population and. Yes, um, we have had some decreases in population and yes, uh, we had some decreases in cost of living might be considered a good thing. Uh, and yes, our poverty level has increased somewhat, but work. That's the same way across the United States of America, and we are doing everything we can from the city's portions, led by the Marion Commission, to positively affect those numbers. There's only so much we can do, and we'll talk about a little bit of that as we go through the budget. And we did this slide just so, um, just to start the narration and start the conversation with our citizens so they can understand the overall budget aspect. Next, Mister Mayor, we'll go into our guiding principles. Um, of course, this is, uh, some things we've been talking about. Um, here. Um, I see ethics, transparency, accountability, integrity, honesty, innovation, creative solutions, responsive customer service, um, responsible ethical behavior, leadership effectiveness. Um, a lot of this can be tied into the budget, uh, by creating an app, um, which is added every citizen to an all-time rate at this point in time, uh, expecting to care about our employees and all people. Um, so we're trying our best. Um, I know we had a few situations this past year. Um, but I think it made us stronger. Um, definitely as a city to look at, look at ourselves and our shortcomings, and we fix that. Um, that's why one of the guiding principles, you know, uh, being innovative. So, we wanted the citizens to kind of see, um, how these principles kind of tie into the budget and they will tie into the budget as we go along with the presentation. Next, Mr. Mayor, is the city priorities, um, everybody's priorities. Um, they have not changed, um, since the last 18 months, although we added a few extra ones over time. Um, of course, service delivery. And those who watch you can read. What's in that being a bucket? Um, one of our biggest infrastructures. Uh, and this will be covered a little bit as we go down the line about our progress and infrastructure. Once again, I'm very satisfied with that from my first 6 or 7 months here and the previous few years before that, just looking back on what was done or not done. Uh, our team engineering department, our mission partners, um, public works, everybody involved with that. Uh, they're doing a great job of pushing things forward. Got a long way to go. Um, acknowledged, but just wanted to mention that, of course. Quality of life. And then the last part of that, probably our most important. Well, I won't say everything is important here, but I see the workforce. We've got a great team. Um, I'm trying to, um, do more to introduce that team to our citizens. Uh, a lot of times they can't see some of the, uh, the unknown work. Uh, I'll go back to some of our, some of our departments that you don't see police and fire public works every day. Um, not necessarily everybody else. Um, but they are holding this, this place together, uh, by supporting our bigger departments out there with our citizens. So, we got a great team. Uh, We got a great workforce. I think everybody can recognize that. There's no question about the workforce and the effort they provide every day to the citizens in the city of Waycross. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. This is just kind of letting citizens know, um, how we can set up, of course, the mayor and the city commission. Uh, then myself and then I work with

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

all the departments on providing services. Again, I like we have got a great team at this time. I'm going to move into, um, the departments. Uh, of course, I will highlight everyone a little time, but if the commission has a specific question, uh, they would like to ask a department head. I will defer to that department head and let them speak on that at this time. Um, just letting everybody know we have about an hour left, and I know we need to get to the actual sales spreadsheets as soon as possible with that. First, we'll start with the, uh, the best integration of information systems in the department led by Mr. Simmons. And you look at his year in review. Uh, one of the main things that was a focal point, uh, during my, my actually my interview here was how do we reach more citizens? How do we talk about how do we communicate better? And I would say, um, if you do that first book, we stopped over 6.7 million views and that's about 100 times improvement, um, since the day I got here, because, um, his department worked hard on our social media presence, um, and on our presence in the city and some things that, um, we have not talked about or this department does go around, um, meet with the business industries to communicate and talk with those individuals so they get insight for those individuals. Um, we're getting a lot of help right now, uh, with our business license practices right now from, um, some key people, um, Mr. Easton Smith, I'll mention him. He's been a great asset to help us improve, uh, business license procedures. And I'm very thankful he came on board in a positive manner to kind of assist us. Um, and, uh, and the last piece I want to talk too long on here, but the Tyler technologies for better service delivery and data management and answer department coordination, um, this is going to be a really big deal when it's done, y'all. I've heard y'all heard me say this before about the integration. Um, with all our systems here in the city, um, in the city. And each department also is going to be, um, really better served for our citizens. They can pay and pay any way they want to here in the future. Um, it will make our app more, more robust, robust, um, it'll make our communications better eventually. And I'm not sure when it's going to happen, but, um, maybe September, October when we can go into the system as well as. Commissioner, you can look in there if you want to know how much we spend on June 1st, April, whatever it is and what it was, you should be able to do that. Correct? Yes. So that's going to put a little another level on transparency. I don't think many cities do. Um, Like I said, we are very transparent here, and I. You know, if we miss something, we miss something. We'll correct it. Um, but I look forward to that day when that happens. So, any system can pop on there and see how much water sewer was collected for that week. And they can make their own determination from there. And the great thing about this is everyone has the correct information, and they inform information, and that way they can make a better-informed decision on how they respond. So, I pause there on that point.

MAYOR: Commissioner, do you have any questions for the city manager, Mr. Gordon? No, sir.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Yes, I have a. Um, and this is directed at, um, Mr. Simmons regarding the new Tyler technology system. I think that we had a discussion about the new car, and you said that. And correct me if I'm wrong in the most recent, um, presentation you did, you said that this system will not accommodate the new car by UnitedHealthcare.

PATRICK SIMMONS: I think it will. There may be some extra steps with the new car, but it will open correctly. It will accept it, but there may be an extra step as compared to your Cash app or your Venmo card. But there's a workaround, an easier workaround for that system for that card. And we plan to have. We're actually trying to do it now I hope I'm not speaking too fast, but a kiosk in the lobby so we can help customers with some of those issues like that. Okay.

So, you're saying that they will be able to use it, but just in the lobby using the kiosk. But there'll be some extra steps. Yes. Okay. Thank you.

CITY MANAGER: Uh, next, we'll move on to the city clerk department. And I want to say, for, um, for structural purpose, uh, we have not changed the charter yet. He will be coming. Um, I want the city clerk to stand alone. Um, I did some research about that position. I think it's better suited. She's not directly underneath me for some of the information she handles. She works directly with the city attorney. And once again, um, this is more geared to transparency. Okay. Once again, transparency. Um, and I've already highlighted this, but, um, you can read it there too. Um, just 115 new business

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

licenses. Approximately 85% compliance with business licenses. Um, just extra revenue, um, created from this and that extra revenue came in and then in turn, um, be put back to the efforts for supporting our citizens. So great job by that department. Um, Miss Powell and Mr. Nixon is here sitting today. Um, and they do a great job of customer service. As we know, this can be difficult sometimes interacting with citizens who might have strong passions about how much stuff costs. And they work very well. Um, both of them keep a level mind, and I've never seen them. Not one time does not resolve the matter with a positive result. And I paused on that department.

MAYOR: Any questions from our city manager? Thank you.

CITY MANAGER: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Mr. mayor, we're moving to community improvement. Um, Mr. Hawkins team. And you can read that for yourself, and citizens can read it as well. Um, this is another one of those jobs that goes unseen. Sometimes when you talk about the amount of animals that we're dealing with every day. Um, we have a lot of pet lovers here in the city of Waycross, and some of them are not responsible. And then we are called in to be responsible for those pet owners, and they do a great job. Um, um, his team just, just, I think Saturday or Sunday I was riding around, and I want to say he picked up some animals. I think they had a truck out there to pick the animals up, but they do ride around, um, pretty much seven days a week trying to help out citizens with, um, with animals. And then two more on the business size on permits. Um, you know, I know it might be some, um, different understanding of how this works, but, um, Mark's team does a great job to, um, Ali, who's, you know, another unknown hero explaining the processes to citizens. And I'm very proud of his team, too. And again, back to Mark's, uh, looking at, you know, being innovative and trying to save us some dollars on salary and then creating another whole additional body to do, um, inspections. It's going to really pay off, um, down, down the road once they get to going every day. So just want to highlight that a little bit. And if you got any questions on that I'll pause for that department. Or if you have questions for that director.

MAYOR: Commissioner, do you have any questions about the city manager's community improvement?

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Mr. mayor, I have a question, But I'll wait till we get to the numbers of the of the commissioner.

MAYOR: Nelson has questions, but he'll hold his questions until we get to the great spreadsheet.

CITY MANAGER: All right. And next we move on to, um, our engineering department. And there are a lot of folks that that help out engineering and firms and public works out a little bit. Um, but the engine up there, that kind of makes it all go as Mr. Strickland, um, who works way above our pay grade on getting stuff done for the city of Waycross, uh, said many times before, there are probably 4 or 5 people here who could be city manager within the city of Waycross and do a pretty good job, and she's going to be in that 1% right there. Um, knowing what needs to be done for serving our citizens and then going, like I said, way beyond, you know, what she gets paid to do. Um, some of those things you can read there as far as the year in review, uh, site plans are a really big deal. Um, if you listen to me as a business site, plans are a really big deal when you turn in first before anything else. Um, she worked with FEMA and in the finance department, um, for our FEMA, um, feedback, uh, technical drawings. Um, so far, it says 11 city streets paved. This is the only kind of ones that have done already. Not the complete, not the ones we're currently working on. And as you know, she gets out there with Mr. Pope, um, city engineer, and they go out there and really go make sure stuff is being done correctly when, you know, concerning with those city streets and roads, uh, and a few other things. So, um, you know, really proud. We've really kind of picked up the pace on the engineering part. Um, definitely. With Mr. British coming in from the from the firm. Uh, he's down here a lot more than just being honest. A lot more than the previous gentleman. I know he got sick, and he had to slow down a little bit. Um, but down here quite frequently. Um, so he works hand in hand with his department, um, down at the water and sewer plant and then, of course, public works, and they go get it done. Um, and they've also saved us some

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

money, um, as well. You can't see it right now. Um, but, um, over time, you'll see as we start load some equipment, uh, we kind of they help identify all lift stations. Um, as far as that about, you know, program when to buy stuff now. So, we already had that ready to go to start um, as far as inventory and life cycle. So, there's a lot of work and these are some things this is the stuff that we consider not sexy. You can't see it, but it's also the things that break the bank. And, um, they're doing a great job over there. So, I'll pause there for any questions.

MAYOR: If you have any questions, please feel free to hear none. Okay.

CITY MANAGER: Uh, next we go to the finance department, and I'm not going to stay here too long because you're going to, he's going to talk to you a little bit about some Excel spreadsheet. But again, um, I will say about his team and he's in here. And so, uh, great team procurement, uh, just find us cost savings and they do a lot of work. Um, last second work to, um, you know, do a lot of good. I call good fairy work as well. I might have a good idea. And they figure out how to make it good on paper. When I come in in the morning sometimes. So, um, a great team down there. They put this; they help this team put this new package together. Um, this budget book, which I think says to not save the picture, projects the picture, um, a lot better about the city where it crosses budget. Um, so I'm going to pause there because, like I said, the finance director, um, Mr. Smith will speak here in a minute. At the end. Next, Mr. Mayor, we're going to go into the, um, the fire department and, um, you know, another tough job. And, um, Chief Blackburn just got on here recently, you know, after serving at, um, I want to say he was the second for a long time, but. Yeah, um, he's the first now, and he's coming from a long line of public service, um, with his father. But it's been a busy year. Um, fire is not. I got to say, I wish it wasn't, but it's been a busy year. Probably too busy already. And not just the fires, but he helped with the police. Um, we've had some bad situations with some cars, um, and some canals and things of that nature. And that's, that's the fire department as well out there helping out with that. They also help out with EMS. Um, yeah. So just a lot going on here. These are stats that we have to promote them so everybody can know how much it's costing. Um, because there's a cost associated with all this stuff. But at the same time, I'm hoping that we can, um, with the help of the citizens, get some of these calls down, uh, especially all the fires, because, you know, um, you know, it can be a bad situation if it keeps going like it is right now. So, um, service calls. I need to put that in to real fast as a plug. This is no cost to the citizens. Um, but they could. They could put in smoke detector installations. Um, they sit down and watch. One day, um, they did more than smoke with one of our more seasoned citizens. Um, we need help on other areas. So, the fire department does a lot of volunteer work, um, to, um, that we don't highlight all the time because, you know, sometimes you just want to do it for the goodness of your heart. And they do a great job getting out and serving the community. They go to the public schools, educate our young folks, um, on fire. Sometimes that goes a different way from young folks' interpretation. Um, but the effort is there. And like I say, um, chief, chief was probably one of the as far as overtime that was, was um, really become an issue. Um, he really got in there and figured that out. And, um, we're working better. And he's picked up, uh, with the previous chief's plan, um, about reorganizing the fire department, um, so they can receive better pay, uh, make the promotions worth it. Um, you know, as far as going up, up the ladder and this overall getting morale back to a good place. So, I'll pause there for any questions about the fire department. Okay.

MAYOR: We have a question. Yes, Commissioner Bennett.

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Thank you. So, you said they come out and change the smoke detectors? I have two that needs to be changed.

CHIEF BLAKCBURN: Mayor and Commissioners. Yes, ma'am. Um, if you call the office, call Miss Lisa, and she'll schedule an energy company. We'll come out, change the battery, or install a new one, whatever it needs. Uh, no charge to the citizen at all for any of it. So, we've recently, in a short time, the American Red cross. We're starting to partner back with them again. And they will provide us smoke detectors free of charge as well. So, we were able to do that for the rebuilding together. We put two

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

smoke detectors in every house that was refurbished inside the city limits. Um, a few weeks ago, I think we did two for each house, so.

CITY MANAGER: And this and this is important because the number of fires we have could have prevented had they had a working smoke detector. That's one thing we learned. So. All right, uh, next, Mr. Mayor, we move to human resources and Miss Hendricks and her team. Um, and this is one of the situations where you can't really see the hard work they do, keeping us all together. Um, she is constantly trying to find improvement, uh, with our health care, um, and our shores in general. Uh, also, uh, just the retention, um, and retention of our quality workforce. Uh, she works with me mainly on just looking at inventive ways to kind of get pay spread. Um, once the director kind of brings up a possible solution, then she takes the football, and she figures it out from there. Um, she also, uh, provides me, uh, I would say insight and recommendations. Sometimes, while I might be missing something with issues in the workforce that goes beyond performance and that's needed as well. So, I appreciate her team, and they do a lot of other things. Um, the main thing they get us more employees, but uh, and she also worked hard to, to get us some cost savings this year. So, I want to thank our team as well. And I pause there. Any question on resources.

MAYOR: Commissioner, for any questions you may have? Okay. All right.

CITY MANAGER: Uh, Nick, Mr. Mayor is going to be in the police department. And, uh, once again, I'm proud of police department and fire, but most of their stats mean something's going wrong. So, I hate to be that way, but, um, so, um, but what I can say is that the total cost of service, they do take care of people. And you see, there's almost 30,000 calls so far this year where they get out there and citizen's calls do the hurricane officers was, um, driving neighborhoods, getting out of the cars, climbing over trees, all those things. If they got a call and we got a lot of calls from people outside of Waycross saying, hey, my grandmothers in Waycross, she answered the phone, you got to go check on her. And they did that. Uh, did that too, while working beyond their normal schedule of duty hours so that, um, and then, of course, just some things they've done to as far as cases and speeding and all those things, uh, they're working hard right now to figure out, uh, this uptick of speeding we have in the city of Waycross. And, you know, I won't touch too much too much on that, but just know, um, they're working on that. And I also know, uh, that we have had a series of break ins, uh, car theft or theft by theft by auto. Um, mainly because people are leaving their car doors open, but they do have a team that's handling that, working with some other law enforcement agencies across the Southeast. And I feel like, uh, I think we get somebody. Let me say that the rest. The rest two last night. Um, they're doing so. But it is a lot of. It's a group. Um, but two down, two down. So, um, and again, uh, Chief Cox came in to like the other directors and move some positions around and save us a little bit of money also, because overtime, you just, um, save us a little bit of money. Um, so I'm thankful for that. And then again, you know, he gives good guidance and insight on some of our community issues and concerns that he's involved with. And it's about community relationships, and he does a great job with that. So, I pause there for the police department.

MAYOR: Any questions for the police department?

CITY MANAGER: All right. Uh, next we move to Public works. Um, public works Director Matt. Matt has been new to us, so he's doing some discovery, learning, interacting with people who might not be so happy in some situations. But he's learning really fast how to figure that out, you know? So, I'm happy about that. So, I got to do it. And, um, he's done a lot too since he's been here. Again, he's one of the first ones to kind of look at, you know, workforce roles and responsibilities and kind of turn, how can we get more efficient? And then how can we retain our talent? Um, I think he brought in, uh, one of our younger mechanics. I'm not sure if he's still there because he, uh, he just went to work so much. He probably wants to go somewhere else to work, too, because he's always working. Uh, but he does a great job with that. He also has done a great job. And this is, uh, I understand the budget on his training budget went a little bit, um, because we do want to make sure that our public works, uh, have the training to do some of the new patching, uh, and sustainment of our streets and roads. So, he sets it up, uh, pretty

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

much every quarter. Working with Got and Sister Cities. And he takes his workforce, and they get trained up on some stuff. So, they're getting trained up. So, citizens see that uptake may be in training dollars. Um, that's where it's coming from. Um, because we want to have a training and ready to work for us to do the jobs out there. Um, for citizens. So, um, especially kudos to his team. And then again, um, they got a lot of work to do. You know, you see the stats there? Uh, almost 30 miles of canals, uh, over 80 acres of cemetery, all the right of ways. And there's some things they can't get to simply because the staff used to be twice the size, um, when the city was much bigger. But they go hard every day. And then, um, they also developed the zone approach that allows us to be able to do more with less by doing the zone. And then we hit every sometimes we hit three districts in one day. Um, and we got to keep up better that way. So, I'll pause there. Any questions on public works Commissioner?

MAYOR: You have any questions for Commissioner Roberts has a question.

COMMISSIONER ROBERTS: Excuse me. Uh, thank you, sir. For the work you all do. But if you and I hope it's the right department. But the problem is on Vernon Street and, uh, welcome the neighbors going down, crashing on the road, and we get some help with that.

CITY MANAGER: That's more policing on community, but they're aware of it. And we're trying to do some, some, some things through that. That goes back again to uh, us increasing our fines and fees for illegal dumping and some other things, because right now it's really not a deterrent to do certain things. But I will say to the public right now, uh, versus go dump stuff you can simply call, you're already paying for it to a certain degree, and we'll come pick up your trash, your, um, your beds, uh, big items, anything except for tires and fuel. So, it's there for our citizens to use versus go dumpster. They don't have to dump anything. Uh, we are also twice a year do the big pickup. Uh, and again, um, just call down public works or use the app if you want to get stuff picked up. There's no reason to dump trash anywhere. It's actually going to cost you more once we do catch you versus just calling what to get picked up. All right. Thank you, sir. Thank you. And try to catch up on schedule. We almost caught up and give the Excel spreadsheet some time. So, uh, that's all as far as the department's kind of selling what they're doing and showing what they're doing and how it ties to the budget. Uh, next week, we'll move into the budget presentation. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here. You pull this straight from GMA. And what I want to do this year is, um, pull the share about how the budget, budget, how it starts, how it's how it's targeted, how it's dated, how it arrives on the steps, um, on what gets done, the definition of everything associated with the budget and then how it's voted on. So, it's about ten pages here to kind of do that. I won't go through this really quickly. Um, but that first page, page 21, is just kind of showing, like I say, the initial guides for the budget and for those citizens. Want you to put this online. Um, this is right from the GMA website, and we stick to this to this show. The next page is just talking about definitions, assets, the budget and calendar expenditures, what a fiscal year is versus calendar year, um, liabilities and revenue. Key definitions there. And then that next page, um, that just kind of goes into some more key terms and definitions. Um, what funds are, um, proprietary? Um, just kind of naming what the funds are capital projects funds, permanent funds, special revenue funds. Um, because we did recognize last year, a lot of our citizens don't understand the budget. And that's been proven through, uh, our, our surveys. We put out, um, and feedback, um, one on one with, with select citizens. So again, pulled straight from GMA website. You go to here to get more information. Um, page 24 is just discussing, uh, just the fiscal year of the. But now this is a shame. We don't necessarily follow these dates, but it is just showing you how you can set up the meeting, the required meetings. And then if you go to page 25, it just goes over the funds in more detail. Um, so when I say capital projects, it's a fund for that. Um, in that nature, uh, enterprise funds, enterprise funds, you know, we're talking about Georgia Power. So, these are things that citizens might not clearly understand. So, I would advise and encourage all citizens, um, you once this is posted, you can look at this. Um, I'm more than that going to a website. So, you truly understand how budget works, uh, versus getting information from somebody who does not. Uh, the next page, uh, page 26, uh, that's discussing, um, the people involved with the budget, you know, it has the finance director appear on top, uh, because if anything happens with the budget, he'll get fired first. Um, and then we have department heads, um, then the city manager himself, uh, and then the then he will know this legislative role, being the mayor and the council and

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

then public input, like we have a public hearing here next month prior to the adoption of the budget. So, and then, um, the next page kind of goes into, um, what we've done, um, with the department leads, how we kind of process the budget this year. Um, and how we, how we projected revenue, which will be on page 28, um, going through page 30. And then on page. On page 32, it. It kind of goes into, um, you know, other the other review process. So, um, this is going to further detail about that. And then it covers some of the how the code works. Um, Georgia state legislation code, how that works about budgets, how implement budgets, who can spend what, who can save say what goes through our auditing system? Um, on page 33, Inspector Scott Small up here, so I can't get 33. So, it kind of goes into Arlington. And I will say right now, um, we always have questions on our audit process. Um, so this year was the first year we met the audit on time as far as well. Last year we made it on time too, but it was this year we kind of made it before time. And um, we did have some findings in there. And some of those findings require, like I said, changing software. Uh, once we get this, this changing software, we'll be able to meet those I think we got three, three main findings left. Um, I discussed one with the training for our finance department and then just reconsolidating our monthly expenses. We already started doing, uh, on a on a better basis. But once we get that new software, uh, that's just fine tune that process. And that should kind of get rid of all our findings on the audit process. It has been a little while. Um, but most cases with the budget, it takes about three years to turn the budget around and stuff like that for those who work in the industry, um, as far as creating and maintaining budgets. Kind of goes into some of our other reporting systems. Um, budget, budget summary. All this right here, the budget messages, starting with the mayor who gave his message. There's a summary in the back of this. So, we followed it line by line as far as creating this part that you have before you. And then it goes into just again, uh, some of the on page 36, some of the definitions and disadvantages of doing budgets, certain kind of ways, when you talk about doing the calendar year, uh, fiscal year and stuff of that nature and it goes through all that, and then it kind of stops, uh, on page 40 where it goes into the summer. And then with that, we'll move into the actual budget presentation, uh, excel sheet. But I gave him 30 minutes for a reason. Um, but I will say, uh, Commissioner, commission. If you have any input that you want to do or add. I don't, I don't want to. If you cannot do what we did last year, just whatever you want to recommend, take a vote on it. We'll add it. Just that simple. Now go back and look at the numbers if you want to make a major increase in something. So just the revenue and expense kind of matches. But I don't foresee anything that's significant. You know that need to be done that way. Um, that being said. This is my last slide here. Um. This year's theme for the budget and it's also in the budget message is Divest and Invest. And you can read that. But to our citizens, um, we made a concerted effort, a concerted effort this year to really get away from stuff that just wasted money, you know, and at the same time, um, get away from things as far as esthetics and make operational and functionality a priority. Um, you know, versus esthetics and maybe some feel good stuff because right now, uh, the Uh, the goal is over. The ten-year plan that we discussed from the beginning is to get the ship going the right way and address those things priority wise first and then move to other priorities as we fix the bigger priorities. So, like I said, we took a hard look at divesting away from certain things that we've been doing. Uh, that's why we're doing the scheduling and zoning, um, getting rid of some of the overtime, uh, getting more efficient and things of that nature. Um, and then reinvesting all that, uh, into the community and the workforce. Um, so again, I'm very proud of our director Institute. They really took that as a challenge. And they went and did it, implemented it. Uh, figured some things out. Um, and it's going to be better for our workforce and our citizens. And I thank the citizens who can feel the immediate impact right now. Um, I get calls every day. Um, back to the Facebook thing. You know, my actual Facebook all day long about the great things that the workforce is doing and the meeting, interaction and response from our department heads, and not just the response on paper, but the but a response on presence. So, um, with that, I'm going to turn it over to the financial director, uh, for his briefing. And we're going to go right into all funds. Summer Smith.

GREG SMITH: Thank you. Dude. I want to give a brief background with my experience here. You know, when I first got here as city manager said we there was plenty of opportunities for improvement in the financial area. But one thing we were doing right before I got here, I had nothing to do with was the budget. The was an active budget. The managers and the directors understand the budget. They went by the budget. They knew they only had so much to spend each fiscal year. And I was very impressed

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

with that from the, from the start. And, and now to me, it's even better. I had some small departments that say, Greg, you just do my budget. I don't want to look at that. And now they're saying, Greg, how come you adjusted this number that I gave you? You know, those kinds of questions. So, and that has nothing to do with me. It's, you know, that we got leadership, city manager. The department heads are just getting better. And I think the finance department is great at answering their questions when they have a question about where I code, what account do I code this to so that the finance department that's not me is good about doing that. Um. And you know, how do we do the budget. You know, there's a column here in the big part of the book showing prior years. You know, we look at that, we certainly get input from the directors, and we look at things, you know, like, uh, cost of cost-of-living increases. Consumer price indexes near the. The fuel prices going up. Georgia power going up. Those sorts of things. Um, and one thing this year we did that I'm proud of is we didn't we didn't put we didn't finance a whole lot of things in the budget. Some of this equipment, we're paying cash for it. So, we're not having to pay interest and pay it over time. So, I'm, I'm proud of that fact. There's some to be honest, some years I'm like, we're going to have to finance everything if we're going to spend all this money on certain expense items. You know, we're just going to have to finance everything. We can't pay cash for things. But fortunately, we didn't have that this year. Uh, one thing that's changed this year is the, uh, the worker's comp insurance has gone down thanks to the risk manager. Uh, Marissa, you know, she's been working on those accounts, trying to get those old workers comp cases settled and get off the books. Um, the. That's the good news. The bad news with the insurance is property tax, not property taxes. Property insurance. Property insurance has crept up. And we call that liability insurance on, on the books because liability insurance is in there. You know, when we have insurance on a police car or building, there's also liability insurance in there. So that's the terms that the city's been using for years there. Um. And um, as, as city manager said, you know, this is not the finance department's budget. It's not the city manager's budget. It's your budget. The city's the city's budget. And these are these numbers are not in concrete. We can adjust them. Of course, now is the time to have questions, see if we need to adjust some things. You know, it's hard to predict the future. You know I you know I can't predict the future. All we can do is do a budget for the divisional directors. You know, they do the best they can. We try to predict what's going on by looking at existing data, looking, like I said earlier, looking at markets to see, you know, how we're going to how we're going to do that. The first page is, uh, 44, uh, in our, uh, in your sheets. And, uh, I love the, uh, page numbers. I've done budgets for years, and it's hard for me to direct people how to get to a certain page by using accounting terms that they don't know what I'm talking about. But page numbers, we understand. So, looking at page 44, you know, it's all funds. As you can see from the top, you know the biggest budget is the general fund in 1919 million. And we're going to get more into to that. But of course, it includes fire uh, fire department police and public works. Uh, the next three are really related, you know, the water bills, you could call them that or utility bill. And, you know, they're them together. You see it's over 10 million, almost 11 million for all that together. And then one, one I wanted to point out at this point is Arpa. It's, uh, well, it looks like six from the from above the total. And, I mean, the one reason I pointed out is such a decrease. The city managers give us directions to try to spend all the Arpa money that we're supposed to, that we're obligated to as soon as possible, because we we've got to spend it for the purposes that that we've decided upon. And the reason I put 75,000 in there is in case we don't get everything spent, you know, this fiscal year, I want to put a number in there to in case we went over, and we had we spent it next year. But it's just a timing thing. We're going to we're going to spend it anyway. Are there any questions. Let me know But.

MAYOR: We go to the commission. Now for questions. I start with district one. District two.

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: So, 75,000 is going to need to be spent between now and next year.

GREG SMITH: But yeah, I put it in next year's budget, even though we want to spend it before June 30th of this year. If we don't, if we do or don't. Either way is fine with the Arpa regulations. But what I'm saying, if we don't spend it by June 30th, we've got to us need to really spend it the next fiscal year. But we've already obligated this money. And this 75,000 is not a specific item. It's just like an overage.

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

If we don't spend it, all of it, that sort of thing. But we're headed towards spending all of it like we're supposed to and why we're talking about Arpa, we're in compliance with those reports.

MAYOR: And understandably, I know that we were supposed to have spent all by 2026, right? If we were. When we first started having our meetings earlier. I think it was 1223. In the end, in early 2024. All right. So that could be a situation to crawl back from us.

GREG SMITH: right. And I've been doing the forums every year and we got two more forums, annual forums to do to cover 26. But there's a place on the forum if for if you if you owe us money, here's how much you know. Of course, ours is zero, but you know, send us a check. That's good.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Yes, ma'am. I have a question. Um, this is just regarding all the funds that are awarded to the city. Yes, I noticed that we do receive funds every year from the housing authority, but there is no, um, separate line item for those particular funds. So where are those? Which project are those funds?

GREG SMITH: They're in the general fund.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: So why are those funds going to the general funds?

GREG SMITH: Uh, one reason is that the description in the book says in lieu of property taxes. And so, it's, uh, as I'm thinking through it, it's in the general fund, uh, just like, which is where police fire, public works is, um, they're getting some benefit from the money that they, they send us and, and those are the benefits. I'd say they are. It's not water and sewer. It's not, you know, any of the other funds. So that's the general fund is where it should go.

MAYOR: And so did you just sound like you were saying is that it has been given to you a specific place that's supposed to be located and that happens to be the location.

GREG SMITH: And to me, it's logical with the way government funding works. So, for it to be in the general, uh, there's a definition in in our handout of what a general fund is. And it could say it meets that definition.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: I just want to follow up. Yes. So um, when these funds are awarded to the city, is there a reason why it is not presented in an open public forum so that citizens are aware.

GREG SMITH: As far as the housing.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: As far as any funds come into the city. Because historically, um, when, when funds are awarded to the city. Yeah. Um, if someone from, from the entity usually comes to the commission to do some form of short presentation just to say that, uh, this particular organization has awarded the city X amount of dollars. So that citizens are aware what funding we have coming in.

CITY MANAGER: So, in the past, I'll put this in the same thing. It's enterprise fund, Georgia Power, me and the mayor, the mayor has been representing the city. They present the Deposit the checks to the mayor, and then we take those checks and deposit them to the general fund. The general fund goes to everyone, not in a particular district. And like the director said, that's where it should go. So, there's no particular fund, like there's no Georgia Power Fund. It's an enterprise fund that's finding definitions as aligned with GMA. So, we've done that. The housing authorities came and presented the last two years. And we've done a post on that and took a picture I think one time. Um, the Georgia Power newspaper was there. So, and those are the main two. I know we got a couple more enterprise funds that provide enterprise checks that we do every year.

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Thank you. Just for point of clarification, I do not recall this particular check being presented to the city.

GREG SMITH: I don't either.

CITY MANAGER: So last year, Commissioner, you asked about housing? Yes. If we can make a change, I said, "Do we want to make a change? We do. Do you want to? We want to do with it But if y'all want to do it, we can do so.

MAYOR: So, the question I'm not sure about is just for clarity. Yeah.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: That's all it was. Just for Clarity.

MAYOR: Yeah. So, I think what we are Making the public aware it's a public awareness thing. I think.

CITY MANAGER: So. So yeah. So last year we briefed that particularly because it was asked why he shouldn't go one place we should go 1 to 1 district. And I explained then that that goes to everyone to the general fund because there is housing authority in all districts. That was that discussion. So, it was discussed in the public forum to everyone.

MAYOR: Right. And I, I recall that I think the Lord said one, give a point when the entities that came in for that presentation, one happened to be, I think, an attorney who came in and talked to us. Uh, Attorney Jackson, if I'm not mistaken, it came in and made a presentation and a conversation around the Housing Authority. So, I understand exactly what you're saying because they are in every district. The housing department is in districts one, two and three where the housing is located in a central office. On in district is in district one. So right across the street from the district. So, what were they doing? He was just basically doing now, I think he was just sharing with us that it's located in the general funds, and it's distributed amongst those who are.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: And yes, ma'am, I'm fully aware of that. Thank you.

GREG SMITH. Um, let's look at the next page. Let me write this down. Sorry.

The next page is General fund summary. Uh, you know, where does where does the general fund revenue come from? Um, and, you know, the biggest part is city taxes and licenses. And we're going to I've got we've got a detail of that we're going to cover too. But as you but that's the biggest part is, is through taxes, including, uh, lost sales tax and licenses. You as you see. And then the, the second half is expenditures, you know, um, and that there's a typo that should be 19 million. There's a space in there that's 19 million. 136 529 the total general fund budget for the proposed budget for the year and then the bottom half of expenditures. Uh, you know, the biggest is police, fire and public works, uh, community improvements in their engineering. You know, they're all at least \$1 million executives who are, uh, over \$1 million. We're going to we're going to cover that. It's not. It's not just Duke's office. It's several departments, as you'll see in a few minutes. That's all I have on that one. But anytime you guys interrupt me or if you have any questions, the next the next page is salaries. And as you see in the upper left it says 4% cola. But we did not. Duke and I did not go into this budget saying we're going to get a 4% Cola. We use different scenarios, 0%, 4%. And it was it would be easy to tell, you know, what two and 3% was if we did zero and four. But after doing the whole budget and, you know, it came out where the budget would balance using a 4% Cola. So of course, that's favorable for us for us for our employees. And, you know, nobody can predict the future. We can't promise that every year. But as but as the commission has approved, you know, that's our goal to look at that every year. Yea.

MAYOR: I did have just a small conversation around this with someone earlier and that was I know back in 2022 there was a vote made, maybe 2021, a vote made by the commission that was sitting at that time for the increase, for the commission, but I don't we did not do the increase for a reason. I'm sure, you know, even though it was publicized and put in the newspaper that it was a change after 40

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

years. Yeah, it wasn't done that way, but I just wanted to make that note. Although it's this is done well, I just want to make sure that you are made aware that they did not increase anything.

GREG SMITH Right. And I've seen that looking at recent history before I got here, that something may be in a may be approved. But then for but for financial reasons they had to back off of it that that sort of thing then goes on to the next page. Uh, general fund.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Um, this is on page 46 of the salary breakdown. I noticed that there was not a salary for the city clerk for the 2025 budget. Could you explain why?

GREG SMITH: Yes. Okay. Yes. Uh, it's in the city manager's budget for the previous year. You see how his went down and hers went up? It's one way to say it. Uh, she needed. We needed to keep track of her expenses and for her to have her own department. Uh, so it was a way to a good bookkeeping thing besides a good budget practice to have it separate. So that's why it went up. The city managers went down, hers went up. It's a simple way to say it, because it was previously in the city manager's budget. And we're going to go over that section's budget in a few minutes. Thank you. Any questions? Please feel free. Thank you. Okay, then go on to page 47. And believe me, I'm not going to go over every page. These are the summaries. I promise you I won't go over every. So, um. Yeah, here's the general fund and it has you know, this is we're talking about trends it on here. The biggest, the biggest, uh, source of revenue for the general fund is city taxes. And we'll go over that in just a few minutes. At the bottom part is the, uh, the categories broken down again. Again, police fire or the big ones there. Any questions or comments? No questions. The next one is uh, page 48 and this is the general fund revenue. And there's just a few items I want to point out, especially one, the local option sales taxes in the. It's under the total city tax, city taxes at the section at the top part. And you know, if you look at the far right where the numbers are, you know, the biggest number is the top row, the current ad valorem taxes 4.2, but the local option sales tax, I wanted to point that out. It's 3.9 almost 4 million. And you know I keep saying that's a way local option sales tax reduces our ad valorem tax. You know, I work I mean I live in the city of Waycross and it's on my tax bill. It shows a reduction in my tax bill. So, and again, this is a good way we keep I keep bringing out that the population of the city of Waycross doubles during the day. So that's a way for people that are commuting in or coming into city of Waycross to go shopping. It's a way for them to pay for the services they provide. So that's a, you know, huge amount. And just today. Roger. The city manager. City. Sorry, sorry. The tax commissioner was asking me. How much did we get lost last year? Because I know he's working on the per diem. I mean, the. Sorry, the property tax. Let me slow down the property taxes for, for this coming year. So that's the main thing I wanted to point out there. The, the middle section, the. Liquor and wine. It went up a good bit because of the US going up, us catching up on, not going up for several years on that tax. All right. So, all right, let's get 50 pages. And this is the executive section. As you can see I wanted to point out it includes several departments within the department or in the executive session where rather, uh, you know, first the mayor, then the commissioners, then several miscellaneous uh departments, including election city attorney, and then the page 52 has the city manager and is the notes to that, say, at the bottom of the page 52 display says City manager. Department includes the city manager and the city manager assistant. So now it's just two people we took and Jackie her department out of there. Uh, then page 53, uh, is the city clerk. So, as you see, there's a bunch of blank columns on page 53 because no history really on having her or that department separate. Uh, 54 is, uh, business integration department. And then that's all of the executive department. And the other is, is there anything I wanted to skip to go on to water and sewer? I think it's page 81. Let's see. Yeah. Page 81. So, the water and sewer department. Uh, the top line, you know, even though we plan to go up on water, sewer fees, the budget did not go up. When I, when we did the budget for 2025, we were anticipating a possible increase in revenue. And of course, that didn't happen. So. But I still feel good about the 2.5 million. Looking at history and taking a percentage increase for volume and price increase. So, I still feel good about the 2.5. And then the sewer tap we did go up Of there because of again the price increase. Looking at prior experience. So, I wanted to point that out. And of course, you know, going up on the revenue side, that means we can go up on the expense side and spend more funds for the water and sewer improvement.

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

CITY MANAGER: And if I can jump in real fast just to highlight a recent event. So, we know we did change out the transponder on the north side of town. This is affecting to meters. And in the last two days I don't want to get too far ahead of us, but it's been reading at a 70% rate. So, you know, that will take our we got roughly about 6800m right now. So, if it continues to what it's doing right now, we probably solve our immediate problem. It probably was that transponder. And that means revenue will change again because all the meters will read as opposed to be probably it gets to 85% like I'm projected to do. And that'll cut down that 1700-meter requirement that I asked the commission to consider. I should know more about this at the next meeting, and I'll brief it then. It's still a good story that the transponders even reading right now. So, we do know what the problem was. It was that transponder they took a couple of years to get it here, but that's just something to think about at a later date when those rates come up. So, it's actually going to help the citizens out because they'll know their true bill won't be exhibition estimation. And then we'll put out further information on how to conserve water, much like Georgia Power does.

MAYOR: We were given a good report last week as far. As how. Well, the transponder is coming in and being a help to some of the citizens. So, I think, Commissioner Nelson.

GREG SMITH: That's about all I have. I'll just summarize, you know, the that the divisional directors, employees, managers of the city, uh, make this possible, make my job a little easier to make the budget balance. I want to give credit. Whoever's idea it was to print on both sides of the paper. That's because I'll take all the cost savings ideas. That's all I have.

CITY MANAGER: Mr. Mayor, I know we have got a few minutes left. I think any commissioner have any further questions.

MAYOR: And I'll open the floor for this one. Did you have any questions? No, sir. Thank you. District two. Mr.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: Yes, I have a question. Um, this is referred to page 55 of the budget book. Under the note, it says General fund will receive 60% and the remaining 40% will be allocated for tourism. Um, previously, it was stated that tourism now falls under the Downtown Development Authority. Is that correct? As opposed to the red cross. I've heard that mentioned several times in several meetings, so I'm asking for clarification.

CITY MANAGER: The tourism still falls in the city.

COMMISSIONER FELDER: You answer the question. Thank you.

CITY MANMAGER: Okay, well, thank you for the question. I would just ask the question. You got any anything you want to add, subtract, or take away? Please let us know from this point up until we do the public budget hearing on June 3rd, we're going to update these books tonight to see us a few medical issues and stuff like that. I'm going to change that. And then, like the finance director stated, we do have some revenue still coming in. Uh, so once we post this to the website, it will be updated. And for everyone in the audience is still pre-decisional because the commission has not voted on the budget. Um, so all things are subject to change up until the budget is passed. So that document is not the final actual document until the commission has voted and passed the budget, and it will be changing from day to day and not day to day, week to week as additional monies come in. And if we find any, um, any other flaws, we build ourselves a couple more times. And if the commission has any input they want to add, we'll make those adjustments as well.

MAYOR: Thank you. So listening to the conversation that we've had thus far, I want to thank the city manager and the team, the department heads who have come alongside him to help create and craft this draft of a budget for us so that at least we have an opportunity to see the step by step process, and also to incorporate our ideas and thoughts as to what we can do to better ourselves and the community, and

*****DISCUSSION NOTES*****

05/20/2025

BPH

or to make it available to individuals who would like to have copies of this information. And I believe the city manager did make a note to us that a link would come out, possibly in the next couple of days for individuals who would like back to view this online. And of course, this is very helpful to all of us. And then by the June meeting we will have more information or some updates, hopefully as the commission and or individuals who have other comments they want to add to the budget. So, with that, do we need to make a last call or do we need to go ahead and just adjourn and move in. We'll adjourn. All right. So, with that, I'll go ahead and adjourn this meeting so that we might take a water break and see what we can do at about 5:00. Okay. There's motion and there is a second. And. All in favor? Aye. Aye. All opposed? And you're out. Thank you, Mr. Smith.