

WORK SESSION
JUNE 11, 2012

The Mayor and City Council of the City of Washington, Georgia, held their monthly work session prior to the regular meeting of council on Monday, June 11, 2012, beginning at 4:30 PM at the Pope Conference Center. Mayor Ames Barnett presided.

Present were Mayor Barnett, council members Armour, Cullars, Harris, Rainey, Scarborough and Tutt. Also present were City Administrator Eskew, City Clerk Danner and City Attorney Fleming.

Visitors included: George Brooks, Billy Hopkins, David Toburen, Mark Waters, Charles Wagner, Susan D. Pope, Norris Ware, Joseph R. Willis, Johnny Wilkinson, Herb Jones, Ashley Barnett, Jenny Clarke, Charles Jackson, Otis Strong, Rosemary Hopkins, Ronnie Huffman, Matthew Huffman, Dick Jones, Claudia Jones, Phyllis Scarborough, Rachel Jackson, Linda G. Echols, Kenneth Echols, Debbie Anderson, Sarah David, Clara Sutton, Eddie Finnell, Barbara Bacon, Blake Thompson, Judy Anderson, Bill DeGolian, Barbara Burns, Patsy Winn, Ann Tanner, Rev. G.L. Avery, Joe Anderson, Sim Dill, Police Officers Nieves and Johnson, Police Chief Glenn, David Jenkins and Kip Burke of the News Reporter.

Mayor Barnett opened the work session by asking council members if, after reviewing the Citizens Review Panel report, they had any questions or concerns. Council members did comment on city reserves, time clock issues, Pope Center payments, consolidation of water systems within the county, joint efforts on Aonia Pass events, recycling incentives, Callaway Plantation timber and campsites, research of a fuel facility and city website. Council members did encourage the Panel to look at the Housing Authority.

Mayor Barnett thanked panel members for work done.

Mayor Barnett advised that the purpose of the work sessions is for council to discuss freely issues prior to the regular meetings of council. He stated that anything that would be brought up for a vote during the regular meeting should be submitted in exact wording to be included in council packets prior to work session/regular meeting. Subjects brought up during work sessions will not be voted on until the following month.

Council member Rainey stated that she had done as requested but was denied to right to bring her items up for vote during the May 2012 regular meeting.

David Jenkins, Economic Developer, advised council that he is working with industrial prospects and current industrial consumers on several expansion efforts. Jenkins also advised that the downtown storefront vacancy rate is about 50% of the national average. Jenkins also reported that the city passed a recent HUD site visit with flying colors. Jenkins also advised that he would seek, during the regular meeting, council approval of application for a USDA 533 program grant for housing.

Jenkins was advised of some grass cutting needs in the Rusher Street development area.

Council member Rainey asked for detailed information on checks written on a monthly basis. Rainey will meet with the City Administrator and Financial Coordinator to determine exact information needed and format.

Rainey also asked that voters affected by the recent city re-districting be notified of their new polling places. Letters will be sent to each voter affected after the November general elections; as the re-districting only affects city elections.

Rainey asked for clarification on how to have council salary adjusted for different levels of GMA training. Council salary is addressed in the City Charter, which can be changed either by legislation of the General Assembly or in some cases by Home Rule.

Rainey also asked who represents the city in tourism matters, since the Tourism Director is hired and managed by the County. Rainey was advised that though the Tourism Director is technically a county employee some events advertised and promoted are indeed events held within the city limits. Hotel/motel tax dollars fund all functions of the Tourism office. There are currently no monies in the city budget for advertising of special events.

Council member Tutt reported excessive road blocks/stops in certain areas of the city and further reported that some business owners were complaining that police activity in their area was hurting their business. Tutt requested that review of videotaped stops be done.

Council member Harris requested that the Mayor appointment a committee to work with city staff to review and make recommendations for cleanup and collection of past due taxes. Council members Scarborough and Tutt volunteered to work with Council member Harris and City staff.

Council member Harris reminded the Mayor and two appointments were still needed on the URA Board.

Council member Harris asked about the status of the Pope Center operating contract and what direction the city should take for future operation of the Pope Center. A called meeting of council will be scheduled to discuss this issue in detail.

Council member Cullars asked about a location to pay Comcast Cable bills in Washington. City Administrator Eskew will provide him with a contact person at Comcast.

Council member Cullars pointed out that Mayor's appointments to boards, commissions and authorities should be made after input and concurrence from council as outlined in City Charter Section 41. Cullars pointed out that his recommendations for the Senior Citizens Board (Patricia Young and Francine Doughty) had not yet been acted upon.

Cullars advised that he would, in the regular meeting, ask for council approval of the recommendations from the electric committee concerning utility penalty rates and cut-off procedures concerning senior citizens.

ADJOURNMENT: Work session adjourned at 5:55 PM.

_____MAYOR

_____CLERK