



CITY OF TOCCOA
CITY COMMISSION
MINUTES • SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

Work Session

City Commission/Court Room

4:00 PM

92 North Alexander, Toccoa, GA 30577

I. CALL TO ORDER

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Terry Carter	Mayor	Present	
Evan Hellenga	Vice Mayor	Present	
Michelle Jamieson	Commissioner	Present	
Gail Fry	Commissioner	Present	
Ron Matheson	Commissioner	Present	
Fredda O. Wheeler	City Manager	Present	
John Dickerson	Attorney	Absent	
Beth Rider	City Clerk	Present	

II. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discussion of Geotechnical Boring at the Ritz Theatre

Mayor Carter introduced Jacob Pinson and Abby Watson with J. Davis Construction and Joe Gardner.

Mayor Carter stated we have an invoice for Geotechnical Boring to test the soil to see what the water table is and any springs so when the construction plan is developed we know exactly what the cost will be and what it will take to make sure it functions well to build on top of it.

Mayor Carter stated when we voted to move forward with the project to get a cost to bring back for consideration, we wanted to do everything we could ahead of time to minimize any unexpected expenses or anything that would be a surprise. We have had a staff review of the entire plan, those comments went back to the Architect and with J. Davis and changes were made to accommodate those request the City staff had made.

Mayor Carter stated this is another step and the final step so you feel comfortable, is to know the conditions of any soil. The original cost estimate was \$12,500.00 and the Architect was able to get another bid at \$9,900.00. Mayor Carter stated that is under the City Managers authorization to approve, but neither he nor Fredda felt comfortable not to bring before the Commission to approve. Mayor Carter stated Mr. Gardner's firm has agreed to pay half of the cost; the City would owe \$4900.00 in order to know the conditions of the soil. Mayor Carter stated from that Jacob and Abby would be able to go and finalize the cost for us to present for everyone's consideration.

Mr. Pinson stated if there is any kind of issue an alleged river or high water table the Civil Engineer would be able to design a solution to address that. It would eliminate the greatest uncertainty the City Staff has about the project.

Vice-Mayor Hellenga stated we know we have had some sink holes not far from this location and his concern if we go ahead with the boring that does not necessarily approve the project.

Vice-Mayor Hellenga stated when the project first came to us the square footage was 5,200 square feet; it came down to 4,300 square feet. Has there been an attempt to bring that down

further? Mr. Pinson stated not since the last one they did. Commissioner Fry stated in an email they received said the geothermal testing is a requirement; we have been working on this for many months; if this is a requirement why are we waiting this late stage of the game to do the testing that should have been done initially. Mayor Carter we are doing this as a due diligence before we sign a contract, this would have normally been done months ago but was not aware of any kind of water table issue or it would have been done at that time.

After further discussion, Mayor Carter stated the vote we took was to move forward with developing a price and bring the price back for consideration. We are asking for approval of an invoice for due diligence and bring you back a true price. Commissioner Fry stated in April when we decided to do it and move forward with it so we could get a price it has been five months and we still don't have a price. What has taken five months? Mr. Gardner stated there have been a lot of comments from the City and other authorities, for instance the automatic fire protection system that was incorporated and we have been making those revisions. The infrastructure and location those were issues we talked about in early August, we have a plan to proceed with those.

Mayor Carter stated we did staff review and wanted that to happen to bring you a good number.

Commissioner Jamieson asked about the utility concerns and if they have been addressed. Mr. Gardner stated when we get the approval we will be able to confirm the plan we have to reroute some of the utilities. Commissioner Jamieson asked once you get this information you have to go back and update plans to account for this, how long will that take. Mr. Gardner stated the Civil Engineer will do that, and he gave a fee of \$2500.00 it should not take long.

Commissioner Jamieson stated you then have to get it re-bid, how long do you expect that to take. Mr. Pinson stated it should be less than a week, it will be a revision. Some of the utility changes will be no cost impact or even less. Mr. Gardner stated we will work with City staff to develop that a more reliable and practical plan.

Commissioner Fry asked Connie Tabor when we will hear if we get the extension. Ms. Tabor stated it should be anytime.

Commissioner Matheson stated all the dollars we are talking about is the shell of the expansion of the building and not the interior the furnishings, carpet, concessions. Mr. Pinson stated we will have any millwork, carpet, light fixtures.

Mayor Carter stated we knew we would buy our concession stand and equipment, Friends of the Ritz agreed to help with that part.

Vice-Mayor Hellenga stated he was disappointed we have not made an effort to bring the size down to get more restroom facilities, ticket booth, concessions and now we have 4,300 square feet of room that not sure what it is used for. We have three different facades and different roof lines, it seems like there are a lot of things that could be done to bring the cost of this project to make it more manageable considering all the infrastructure needs the City of Toccoa has at the moment. Commissioner Jamieson stated her concern is we do not have a final cost or know if we are going to get an extension or how long it will take to get the additional monies required to finish the project. Mayor Carter stated when we voted to move forward with this project it was split but we got the vote to move forward with the building. We were charged to take these plans and get it priced out; there was no conversation when the vote was made about making the building smaller. Mayor Carter stated he recalled Vice-Mayor Hellenga stating he would like to have the building smaller during discussion, not

during the final vote. The charge was to move forward with this plan and get the cost and bring it back, we have done that very detailed and looked at every possible scenario where things could not turn out and we have surprises. Mayor Carter stated that is one reason we did not want to go to contract without staff review and plan review, things can come up and we wanted to avoid that. We want to know now the condition of the soil and that is a \$4,900 investment to be able to weigh that out, out of the generosity that the architectural firm is giving the City of Toccoa \$5,000 that they have no obligation to do. Mayor Carter stated we are so grateful for you to help us with that, so to bring up the size is irrelevant. Mayor Carter stated Jacob and Abby has a number, they have been in contact with their suppliers to get a number should be relatively quickly once we get the test results back. Mayor Carter stated he and Connie has sent the necessary documents to the Appalachia Regional Commission to get an extension on the grant and should know back soon on it, we are trying to bring back a number you can trust. Mayor Carter stated they have met with the bond issuing company, once we have a contract and signed the bonding company will start the process. After further bond discussion, Mayor Carter asked for a consensus to move forward with the contract to do the boring pending upon getting approval of the extension of the grant so we will know what to do.

Commissioner Fry asked where did the alleged spring information come from and why are we concentrating on this. Commissioner Fry asked Utilities Director Harry Scott if there is a relative true reason to believe there is a spring there. Mr. Scott stated what we have done around the area water is coming from somewhere, they ruled back in the day it was coming from under the Ritz. Personally, the money spent to do the boring to find out would be money well spent whether the project goes through or not it would give us good information on what the City owns.

Commissioner Matheson stated we need a deadline extension first, second revised cost and third boring. Ms. Tabor stated Brittany Pittman, ARC representative has indicated verbally that she felt we could get the extension, but do not have anything official. Commissioner Jamieson stated her concern we have lost one grant, is because it has been so long in the making and the reason we jumped on this in April was because we were afraid we would lose this grant. If we knew then that this was not going to happen in the timeline in which we asked for why are we just now asking for an extension? Mayor Carter stated he didn't think it would take as long as it has taken to work through the architectural plans and do the due diligence we are in the middle of doing now. When you ask for a consultant to do something you cannot control how quickly they reply it is that type of thing. Commissioner Jamieson stated we still don't know if we are getting an extension and if we don't, this project is due July 1st, it won't happen. Why would we spend additional monies when we don't have answers or have a way of knowing if we are going to be able to do the project time line. Mayor Carter stated his suggestion would be to approve moving forward with the test subject to getting confirmation the grant will be extended, if we find the grant will not be extended then we don't move forward with the testing. Commissioner Matheson and Fry stated they agreed with Harry that he may have another project in the future. Mayor Carter stated we are trying to do a good thing for the community and we will keep moving. Commissioner Fry asked when will we know a bottom line number, we have been told numbers have been presented and the rest of the Commission has not seen those numbers. Commissioner Fry stated we voted for a price and if it is going over that price, she is not willing to move forward. Mayor Carter stated that is why we are doing what we are doing is so the number

we bring will be as accurate as it can be. Mayor Carter thanked Mr. Gardner for the generosity of his firm for the \$5,000.00, and to Jacob and Abby for the time they have invested.

RESULT: PRESENTATION

2. Discussion of Lease Agreements for City Owned Properties

Discussion of lease agreements for City owned buildings.
City Manager Wheeler stated we have leases for 30 years, 3 years and some one year. If we could get a consensus of what we want the leases to look like. What the City will be responsible for whether the entire building, HVAC or plumbing or what the tenants will be responsible for. We want to be consistent and fair for everyone we have leases with.
Commissioner Fry stated the Hope Center Lease needs to be redone and what buildings will be included in the lease and all on the same page as to what we will be responsible for.
Commissioner Jamieson stated we give these places free rent or \$1 we should share in the cost involved to maintain these buildings.

Mayor Carter stated we should table this and have another work session to be more constructive. Some organizations cannot work on a three year lease, some may need 10 years. We need to look at each one individually.

RESULT: TABLED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Gail Fry, Commissioner
SECONDER: Michelle Jamieson, Commissioner
AYES: Carter, Hellenga, Jamieson, Fry, Matheson

Whitman Street Building, Hope Center, Housing Authority

Chamber of Commerce

Historical Society

3. Other Items of Discussion

III. ADJOURN

Mayor Carter adjourned the work session at 5:00 pm



W. Carter

Mayor
Beth Rider

City Clerk