CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

City Council Chambers

Monday, July 13, 2026 at 7:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present

Mayor Becky S. Smith; Council Members Bill Whitmire, Nellie Floyd, Allen Hook, Brenda Boyd, Manny Tsambouniery and Chris Harmon were present. City Manager Josh Ross and City Attorney, Marshall Walker were also present. A quorum was established.

Call to Order, Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order. Council Member, Nellie Floyd, led those in attendance in a prayer for the community. Mayor Smith led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adjustment and Approval of the Agenda

By motion of Brenda Boyd and unanimous vote, the July agenda was approved with the following revisions:

- Table Items *#8) Ordinance - Text Amendments for Stormwater Compliance and #9) Resolution - Adoption of Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP)*

Special Presentation

Police Department-

Mayor Smith administered the oath of office to officer Kyle Rosenthal. She congratulated Rosenthal on joining the city and encouraged the audience to applaud him for his service.

Request to Speak/Opportunity for Public Comment

Mayor Smith opened the floor for public comment. The following came forth:

- Aaron Grosdider of 517 Costner School Road: Mr. Grosdider addressed Council and commended Council Member Chris Harmon and the Police Department for their work recovering a stolen vehicle. He expressed concerns regarding the towing of a vehicle, questioned why recently branded City vehicles did not display identifying unit numbers, and stated that vehicle identification numbers could provide both accountability and an opportunity for citizens to recognize employees for exemplary service. Mr. Grosdider also raised questions regarding budgeted drug seizure revenues and requested additional information regarding expenditures associated with Stinger Park. He encouraged the City to provide additional financial information through the City newsletter. Mr. Grosdider also noted that the city's most recent rebranding project utilized taxpayers dollars. In his opinion, these monies could have been used for other things.

- Courtney Womack of 517 Costner School Road: Mrs. Womack encouraged Council members and staff to consistently speak into their microphones to improve the quality of the City's meeting broadcasts. She noted that portions of the previous meeting experienced audio issues and suggested improvements to ensure better public accessibility. Ms. Womack also requested that meeting

agendas and minutes for advisory boards, including the Downtown Development Board and ABC Board, be made available on the City's website. She concluded by expressing support for the proposed Keep Bessemer City Beautiful Board.

- Scott Noblett of 109 S. Inman Avenue: Mr. Noblett spoke regarding communication with residents and suggested reinstating informational inserts within utility bill mailers to educate citizens on City ordinances, code enforcement issues, and water conservation requirements. He stated that many residents rely on mailed information rather than online resources. Mr. Noblett also expressed concerns regarding litter, drainage maintenance, overgrown vegetation, and debris accumulation throughout the City and offered photographs documenting areas in need of attention.

- Cairo Moorman of 106 South Inman Avenue: Mr. Moorman thanked Community & Economic Development Director Amber Bridges, City Manager Josh Ross, and Planning Director Jamie Watkins for keeping him informed regarding concerns previously raised about a noise complaint involving the Rio Tinto facility. He stated that he appreciated the communication and looked forward to future updates and continued progress toward addressing neighborhood concerns.

- **Public Comment Acknowledgment:** Following the public comment period, City Manager, Josh Ross clarified that the City's recently installed vehicle branding decals referenced during public comment were funded entirely through the RC2 Grant Program and were not purchased using General Fund revenues.

Consent Agenda
The following items on the Consent Agenda were unanimously approved by motion of Brenda Boyd:

1. **Approval of Minutes**: City Council will consider adopting the Regular Meeting minutes of the June 8, 2026 meeting.

2. **Approval of Minutes**: City Council will consider adopting Work Session Meeting minutes of the June 23, 2026 meeting.

3. **Temporary Street Closure Request – N. 12th Street:** City Staff is requesting the temporary closure of N. 12th Street on Monday, September 14, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. to accommodate the Ella May Wiggins Mural unveiling ceremony. The temporary street closure will provide a safe environment for attendees and allow for the successful presentation of this community event.

Public Hearing- Conditional District Urban Residential (Hidden Valley)
Planning Director, Jamie Watkins presented the request and explained that the proposed development consists of 38 dwelling units, representing approximately 59 percent of the maximum density otherwise permitted under existing zoning regulations. She stated that the development emphasizes conservation design through increased open space, preserved natural habitat, smaller residential lots, and neighborhood amenities.

Mrs. Watkins reviewed the proposed conditions of approval, including architectural standards requiring stone or masonry accents, enhanced building elevations, glass design elements, sidewalks, stormwater amenities, and a centrally located pocket park. There will also be a HOA maintained community garden. She explained that the development offers a housing type not currently available in Bessemer City by providing smaller homes with reduced yard maintenance while preserving larger common open spaces.

Mrs. Watkins reported that a community meeting had been conducted as required under the City's development process and that notification letters were mailed to surrounding property owners. She advised Council that the Planning Board recommended approval of the request by a vote of 4-1.

Mrs. Watkins inquired if Council had any questions related to this rezoning. There were none.

Additionally, Jamie noted that project engineer Kyle Crow was present to answer technical questions regarding the development.

By motion of Chris Harmon and unanimous vote, the public hearing was opened at 7:27 PM.

Mayor Smith asked if there was anyone to speak in favor of the conditional district rezoning. The following came forth:

- Cairo Moorman of 106 South Inman Avenue: Mr. Moorman asked whether the proposed green space and community garden would be open to the general public or reserved for residents. Staff explained that the common areas would be owned and maintained by the homeowners association.

Mayor Smith asked if there was anyone to speak in opposition of conditional district rezoning. The following came forth:

- Courtney Womack of 517 Costner School Road: Mrs. Womack spoke in opposition to the proposal, expressing concerns regarding reduced development standards, sidewalk connectivity, parking on smaller lots, accessibility accommodations, and the importance of ensuring developers fulfill project commitments.
- Scott Noblett of 109 S. Inman Avenue: Mr. Noblett stated that he supports growth but questioned whether existing taxpayers would ultimately bear infrastructure costs associated with new development. He also requested additional sidewalk improvements near the municipal pool for student safety.

- Aaron Grosdider of 517 Costner School Road: Mr. Grosdider expressed support for economic growth but questioned whether the proposed development should receive relief from existing development standards and urged Council to apply regulations fairly.

By motion of Brenda Boyd and unanimous vote, the public hearing to consider the conditional district rezoning was closed at 7:39 PM.

Public Hearing- Proposed Text Amendments for Stormwater Compliance
Planning Director, Jamie Watkins presented an overview of the City's proposed Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) and explained that the amendments are necessary to maintain compliance with the City's MS4 permit and federal Clean Water Act requirements.

She explained that the ordinance establishes the City's authority to regulate stormwater discharges, inspect facilities, enforce illicit discharge regulations, require operation and maintenance agreements, establish inspection easements, and create an appeals process through the Downtown Development Board.

Mrs. Watkins further explained that the five-year Stormwater Management Plan provides a framework for reducing pollution, protecting water quality, and meeting North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality requirements.

By motion of Allen Hook and unanimous vote, the public hearing was opened at 7:56 PM.

Mayor Smith asked if there was anyone to speak in favor of the proposed text amendment. The following came forth:

- Scott Noblett of 109 S. Inman Avenue: expressed support for stormwater improvements but encouraged the City to continue emphasizing routine maintenance of drainage systems, removal of yard debris from storm drains, and public education regarding property maintenance.

Mayor Smith asked if there was anyone to speak in opposition of the proposed text amendment. There was none.

By motion of Chris Harmon and unanimous vote, the public hearing to consider the proposed stormwater text amendment was closed at 7:59 PM.

Downtown Development Board Appointments
City Clerk, Hydeia Hayes addressed Mayor and City Council regarding all applications received by citizens to serve on the downtown development board.

By motion of Brenda Boyd and unanimous vote, Sohil Shah (June 30, 2029), Eric Griffin (June 30, 2029), Cairo Moorman (June 30, 2028), Tony Pasour (June 30, 2027), and Justin Black (June 30, 2027) were appointed to serve on the Planning & Zoning Board of Adjustments.

Downtown Development Bylaw Changes
City Manager Josh Ross presented revised Downtown Development Board bylaws, noting that the updated version clarified officer responsibilities, attendance requirements, reporting expectations, and procedures regarding member removal for excessive absences.

By motion of Bill Whitmire and unanimous vote, the downtown development bylaws were adopted.

Façade Improvement Grant (FIG) Update
City Manager Josh Ross presented proposed updates to the Façade Improvement Grant Program. Mr. Ross explained that the revisions clarify program language and increase the maximum reimbursement from $2,500 to $5,000 through a dollar-for-dollar matching grant. Property owners must complete improvements before reimbursement is issued.

By motion of Manny Tsambouniery and unanimous vote, the façade improvement grant (FIG) updates were approved.

Building Rehabilitation Improvement Grant (BRIG) Update
Mr. Ross presented updates to the Building Rehabilitation Incentive Grant Program, which provides assistance for interior rehabilitation projects that are not visible from the exterior. The proposed revisions increase the maximum reimbursement from $10,000 to $20,000 while maintaining the reimbursement-based funding structure.

By motion of Manny Tsambouniery and unanimous vote, the building rehabilitation improvement grant (BRIG) updates were approved.

Street Closure- Church of God 5K Event

City Manager Josh Ross presented a request for the temporary closure of North 12th Street to accommodate the Bessemer City Church of God 5K scheduled for September 19, 2026. Mr. Ross explained that staff has worked closely with church representatives to ensure compliance with City event policies, including insurance requirements, traffic control, and public safety planning. He noted that this will be the church's first community 5K event.

By motion of Allen Hook and unanimous vote, the street closure was approved.

Adoption of Updated Water and Sewer System Development Fees
Director of Special Projects, Jamie Ramsey presented the updated Water and Sewer System Development Fee Study prepared by McGill Associates. Mr. Ramsey explained that state law requires local governments to review and update system development fees every five years. City Manager Ross added that these fees are restricted by statute and may only be used for water and sewer capital improvement projects that serve future growth.

By motion of Manny Tsambouniery and unanimous vote, the water and sewer system development fees were approved.

City Manager's Report
City Manager Josh Ross provided several departmental updates.

Mr. Ross reported that the City remains under Stage 1 Voluntary Water Conservation and staff continues monitoring drought conditions daily. Although recent rainfall has been beneficial, additional rainfall is needed before conditions significantly improve. Staff is also preparing proposed ordinance amendments establishing an additional drought response stage, which will be presented during a future work session.

Mr. Ross welcomed Planning Director Shelley Stevens, who began employment the previous week, and noted that she will work closely with Jamie Watkins during the transition. Jamie Watkins will transition to Stormwater Manager and Planning Technician.

He announced that Osage Mill recently received a statewide award recognizing its redevelopment efforts through NCDDA.

Mr. Ross also reported that the City continues investing in sidewalk improvements throughout the community and intends to expand pedestrian infrastructure each year as funding becomes available.

Construction preparations for the Ella May Wiggins Mural continue, with the unveiling ceremony scheduled for September 14th, 2026.

Finally, Mr. Ross proudly announced that the City had officially been removed from the Local Government Commission's Unit Assistance List (UAL). He stated that this achievement reflects years of financial improvements and positions the City to continue pursuing major projects and future investments. Mayor Smith commended City Manager Ross, Finance Director Diane Jenkins, City staff, and Council for their collective efforts in achieving this milestone.

Council General Discussion
Council Member Bill Whitmire reported receiving positive feedback from citizens regarding recent code enforcement efforts and congratulated staff on the City's removal from the Unit Assistance List (UAL).

Council Member Nellie Floyd expressed excitement regarding the City's improved financial standing and removal from the UAL.

Council Member Allen Hook congratulated Officer Kyle Rosenthal on joining the Police Department and thanked Jamie Ramsey and City staff for their continued dedication to serving the community. He also thanked residents for their patience during ongoing improvement projects.

Council Member Brenda Boyd reflected on the City's financial progress, noting that the accomplishment represents years of hard work. She also complimented Shannon Ramsey for organizing a successful Veterans Luncheon and thanked the Police Department for addressing concerns within her ward.

Council Member Manny Tsambouniery thanked staff and citizens for their participation in the City's continued progress and expressed optimism for future initiatives.

Council Member Chris Harmon shared that he has received positive comments from residents regarding recent cleanup efforts at Stinger Park and the City's sidewalk improvement projects.

City Manager Ross concluded by announcing plans for a public grand reopening celebration for the renovated Stinger Park trail to increase public awareness and encourage community use.

Adjournment
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 PM, by motion of Brenda Boyd and unanimous vote.

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Becky S. Smith, Mayor Hydeia Y. Hayes, City Clerk