CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

APRIL 06, 2026 AT 6:00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBERS - 1859 CITY CENTER WAY, JONESBORO, GA 30236

MINUTES

I. CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sartor at 6:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called by City Clerk Jewett.

- Mayor Donya L. Sartor
- Mayor Pro-Tem Asjah Miller
- Councilmember Chelsey Curney
- Councilmember Alfred Dixon
- Councilmember Cameron Dixon
- Councilmember Santia Fox
- Councilmember Tracey Messick (Absent)
- City Attorney, LaTonya Wiley (Arrived at 6:03 p.m.)
- City Clerk, Shandrella Jewett
- Community Development Director, Faith Akuta
- Downtown Development Authority Director/Economic Development Manager, Blue Cole
- Finance Director, Karen Slaton-Dixon
- Operation/Human Resource, Maria Wetherington
- Police Chief, Christopher Cato
- Public Works Director, Marcus Heard (Absent)

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

A. Council to consider approval and adoption of the amended Agenda.

The following amendments were made:

- Letter E. was removed - Council to discuss and consider approval of a Pavement Condition Survey.
- Letter I. was removed - Council to consider approval of an invoice for America250 (July 2nd Block Party Celebration).
- Added new Letter E. - Council to discuss Runsboro GA 5K.
- Added new Letter I. - Council to discuss resolution protocol for JYCG.
- Added Letter K. - Council to discuss FY 26 Budget Books.

RESULT: **Approved (Amended Agenda – Vote was unanimous)**

MOVER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Miller**
SECONDER: **Councilmember Messick**

IV. MAYOR'S PRESENTATIONS

None

V. PRESENTATIONS

Proclamation Recognizing National Black Bookstore Day.

Marcus Williams, owner of Nubian Bookstore, accepted the proclamation and noted that the business has been operating for 27 years.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS (PLEASE LIMIT COMMENTS TO THREE (3) MINUTES)

Linda Wenz (Jonesboro Resident) – Ms. Wenz read a letter she received from Mayor Sartor concerning a tree removal issue on her property and expressed appreciation for the Mayor's response. She shared concerns based on her experience with Toby's Tree Service, Inc. and the City. A written letter was provided to the Mayor and Council by Ms. Wenz. Lastly, she stated her purpose was to request written assurance from the City and the tree service that the tree removal would proceed without further interruption.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Council to discuss updated information regarding the forensic audit.

City Attorney Wiley led the discussion. She advised Mayor and Council that the contract with Plante Moran is for **Financial Analysis Services** and not an audit. It expressly disclaims the fact that it's an audit. Therefore, with this disclaimer, there are things they are not required to do in terms of auditing practices.

The City already paid $15,000.00 for Phase 1 and if the City pays $45,000.00 for Phase 2 & 3, that will total $60,000.00. The balance left to pay would have been $5,000.00 out of the retainer. This would have equaled an overall total of $65,000.00. Anything over the $5,000.00 (retainer) would have required a written request and authorization for keeping the entire retainer. The retainer was not for future allocation of work.

City Attorney Wiley spoke to Michelle of Plante Moran and Michelle said they would be keeping the City's $20,000.00 retainer as it relates to what is left to do. If Plante Moran keeps the $20,000.00 retainer + $15,000.00 previously paid by the City + $45,000.00 for Phase 2 &3, that would total $80,000.00. Again, the contract reads anything over $65,000.00 would have required written authorization.

As of tonight, the City has paid $15,000.00 and Plante Moran said they would be keeping the $20,000.00 retainer and no additional cost would be incurred by the City. Therefore, Council agreed to pay $29,500.00. This would bring the total to $64,500.00. Michelle advised City Attorney Wiley that she could not make the April 13, 2026 Regular Council Meeting but would send one of her representative/partners. Michelle would check the senior managers scheduled to see if he is able to present before Mayor and Council on April 13, 2026.

A motion was made to approve payment to Plante Moran in the amount of $29,500.00.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote 4 to 2)**
MOVER: **Councilmember A. Dixon**
SECONDER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Miller**
AYES: **Mayor Pro-Tem Miller; Councilmembers Curney, A. Dixon, and C. Dixon**
NAYS: **Councilmembers Messick and Fox**

Councilmember Fox asked if the vote made on March 2, 2026 to pay $45,000.00 was null and void. City Attorney Wiley said Plante Moran decided on their own that they would keep the

City's $20,000.00 retainer. Therefore, this changed the amount due to Plante Moran. They cannot go above $65,000.00 unless they come before Mayor and Council for approval.

B. Council to discuss Jonesboro Education Trust (JET) Pilot Program Initiative.

Councilmember A. Dixon led the discussion and said updated documents were in the Agenda Packet with the exception of the Memorandum of Understanding. He reported that significant progress has been made and that the City is currently awaiting the finalized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is under review. At this time, Mayor and Council asked various questions and answers were provided.

Point of Personal Privilege - Councilmember A. Dixon acknowledged the presence of Honorable Mary Baker, member of the Clayton County Board of Education (District 6).

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Council to discuss Alcohol Pouring license application, **26-ALC-001** to pour beer, wine & distilled spirits at 7955 Tara Boulevard, Jonesboro, GA. 30236. The legal business name is Sugar Bush Bar & Grill Sports Bar. Irene Wahju has requested to be the License Representative.

Community Development Director Akuta led the discussion. The applicant meets all requirements and staff recommended approval of the request.

RESULT: PUBLIC HEARING 04/13/2026

B. Council to discuss Variance Application **#26-VAR-001**submitted by Max Kovtoun for properties located 262 and 294 South Main Street (Parcels #06032A B002, 06032A B002Z, & 06032A B006), Jonesboro, Georgia 30236 within the MX (Mixed Use) District and the G (Gateway South District). The properties consist of 29.14 +/- acres. The request seeks approval to allow encroachment into the required stream buffer to accommodate the proposed development.

Community Development Director Akuta led the discussion. She shared a Project Overview Presentation. Staff recommended approval of the request and revised site plan.

City Attorney Wiley advised that any approval by Mayor and Council would be contingent upon the applicant demonstrating compliance with all applicable state and federal stream buffer regulations. She noted that approval of a local variance does not exempt the applicant from requirements imposed by other regulatory agencies (U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers), including EPD, and that additional mitigation requirements may be required at the state level. Any approval by Council would need this Condition.

Director Cole stated that the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission must be contacted first, and then the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers. Mayor and Council asked various questions and received answers.

Mr. Harris of Prestwick Development Company responded to questions from Mayor and Council regarding the proposed development and stream buffer variance. He stated that the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission has visited the site and remains involved in the review process. They are making sure all requirements are met and adhere to on behalf of the city, state, and federal. He stated there are no significant environmental impact at this time.

RESULT: PUBLIC HEARING 04/13/2026

C. Council to discuss Unused Personal Leave Program.

Council discussed a proposed Unused Personal Leave Program intended to serve as a retention and incentive tool, particularly for employees who accumulate significant leave due to staffing shortages—most notably within the Police Department. The City Attorney informed Mayor Sartor that personal leave, once accrued, belongs to the employee and must be paid out upon

separation, regardless of notice. The City can no longer withhold payout for failure to give two weeks' notice.

Employees meeting service requirements would be allowed to cash in unused personal leave, subject to available funds:

- 3–5 years of service: May cash in up to 40 hours, retaining at least 40 hours.
- 5+ years of service: May cash in up to 80 hours, with a revised proposal requiring only 40 hours remaining.
- Participation is optional; employees may cash in fewer hours if desired.

The cash-in option would occur once annually, likely in the fourth quarter, and would be contingent upon available budget savings. Funds would not be pre-budgeted due to fluctuating usage and would instead be determined based on year-end financial performance.

Requests would require verification by HR (hours and years of service) and Finance (fund availability), with the Mayor serving as final approval authority. Councilmembers Curney raised concerns about transparency and asked that administrative verification steps be clearly stated in writing.

Approximately seven employees citywide currently meet eligibility thresholds. The program is not intended to count as income toward annual salary and excludes part-time employees who do not accrue leave. The program also aims to standardize and formalize past informal practices related to leave accrual and payout, ensuring consistency, equity, and fiscal control.

The Mayor indicated the proposal would be revised to reflect Council feedback—particularly regarding approval language, retained leave balances, timing, and funding clarity—and brought back for formal consideration at a future meeting.

D. Council to consider proposed salary increases for full-time sworn law enforcement officers and probation officers.

Police Chief Cato spoke regarding the proposed salary increases for sworn law enforcement officers. He emphasized that law enforcement agencies nationwide are competing for officers and that the City of Jonesboro currently ranks at the lowest pay tier within the county and surrounding jurisdictions, averaging approximately $8,000.00 below comparable metro-area salaries.

Chief Cato reported that recruitment has become extremely challenging and stressed that it is critical for the City to become competitive in order to attract qualified candidates. He stated that the timing is pivotal and urged Mayor and Council to consider the importance of public safety for both residents and officials.

Funding would come from salary savings ($84,581.82 current staffing vacancies) and ($60,217.28 increase related to future staffing for unfilled positions). It was confirmed that these funds are already available within the existing budget. (14% increase would go towards current full staff and 10% would go towards probation.) Lastly, Chief Cato spoke about the City's hiring bonus, referral fee, and tuition reimbursement. Mayor Sartor stated that all staff are eligible for the referral fee and tuition reimbursement. Also, she stated that next year's budget needs to reflect a higher minimum wage and compensation increase across the board for everyone. This does not include "non-post certified officers."

The Mayor clarified that savings generated from departmental vacancies are part of the General Fund, not exclusively tied to a single department. She explained that while a department, such as the Police Department, may use a portion of its savings for its own needs, remaining funds may be reallocated citywide to promote equity across departments. The Mayor emphasized the importance of balancing departmental needs while ensuring fairness

and retention of quality employees throughout the organization. This underscores the need to remain competitive in order to attract and retain qualified employees.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOVER: **Councilmember A. Dixon**
SECONDER: **Councilmember Curney**

Point of Personal Privilege - At this time, Councilmember A. Dixon acknowledged the Mayor of Stockbridge for attending tonight's Work Session.

E. Council to discuss Runsboro GA 5K.

Councilmember A. Dixon discussed the proposed Runsboro GA 5K, a community wellness initiative established in 2019 to promote health, unity, and engagement. He explained that the 5K run/walk would require coordination among Public Safety and Public Works. The Police Department advised that approximately 18–20 officers would be needed for route safety and intersection control, consistent with similar past events, and that officers would not need to be paid by the event organizers. Public Works support would be required for barricades and road closures.

Mayor Sartor expressed concern about the short planning timeline, emphasizing that 5K events typically require at least six months to one year of advance planning due to staffing, funding, and administrative demands. She reiterated prior administrative guidance to limit summer events to one per month and noted that 60 days' notice is insufficient for an event of this scale. The Mayor stated that if the event could not occur without Public Works or additional staff support, it should be scheduled later in the year.

Councilmember Messick echoed the need for adequate advance notice, citing prior resident complaints related to road closures and access issues during similar events. She stressed the importance of early notification to residence and business owners along the route.

The following discussion of the City's existing summer event schedule and staffing constraints, Mayor and Council expressed consensus that the Runsboro GA 5K should be considered for a fall timeframe, such as August or September 2026, to allow sufficient planning, staff coordination, and public notification.

F. Council to consider Roadway Striping on Fayetteville Road (Tara Boulevard to Smith Street) for safety improvements.

Police Chief Cato led the discussion. He stated that Public Works Director Heard was absent but had submitted a written recommendation. He advised that this road is one of many roads throughout the City that needs to be re-striped. However, he cited recent complaints and his near head-on collision attributed to faded or missing striping as the reason the issue was elevated for immediate attention.

Staff recommended restriping the roadway at a cost of approximately $11,658.00. Wildcat Striping and Paving Company were recommended to perform the work. While the City has multiple areas in need of restriping, this segment was prioritized due to safety concerns. It was confirmed that funding for the striping is included in the current budget and that all recommended expenditures have been validated financially.

RESULT: **CONSENT AGENDA 04/13/2026**

G. Council to consider releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Sanitation Services.

A motion was made to table the item until the return of Public Works Director Heard.

RESULT: **Approved to table (Vote was unanimous)**
MOVER: **Councilmember Messick**
SECONDER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Miller**

H. Council to consider a fee waiver for Lee Street Park rental and Special Event Permit for August 29, 2026 - 11th Annual Jeffrey E. Turner Fitness 5K Run/Walk for Clayton County Juvenile Court CASA Program.

RESULT: **CONSENT AGENDA 04/13/2026**

I. Council to discuss resolution protocol for JYCG.

A motion was made to table the item since it was not included in the packet and Mayor & Council need time to review. Councilmember A. Dixon said he is waiting on feedback from City Attorney Wiley regarding the matter.

RESULT: **Approved to table (Vote was unanimous)**
MOVER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Miller**
SECONDER: **Councilmember A. Dixon**

J. Council to consider approval and adoption of an amendment to the City's Fence Ordinance (86-264) to update and clarify regulations, including allowable fence heights on side and rear yards. The amendment establishes revised standards designed to enhance privacy, improve security, and maintain neighborhood aesthetics.

Community Development Director Akuta led the discussion and provided a presentation. Council discussed proposed amendments to the City's Fence Ordinance clarifying allowable fence heights and permitting requirements. Staff explained that commercial and industrial properties would be permitted to have a maximum fence height of eight (8) feet on the side and rear yards, while front yard fence height would remain limited to four (4) feet, with no impact from the proposed changes. The City currently does not have an application to put up a fence. If approved, the City would now charge a $25 application fee to put a fence. This would allow the City to review fence materials, placement, and compliance prior to installation. A six (6) feet fence is the max; However, the City would need to be able to administratively review the request and determine if the eight (8) feet fence would be proper to have or not.

City Attorney Wiley said the City has a fence ordinance 86-264. This ordinance would amend the existing ordinance 86-264.

RESULT: CONSENT AGENDA 04/13/2026

K. Council to discuss FY 26 Budget Books.

Councilmember Messick inquired about status of the full budget books with tabs that break down the expenditures. Mayor Sartor said the Finance Director is working on a full budget book.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter.

At 8:50 p.m., a motion was made to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOVER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Miller**
SECONDER: **Councilmember A. Dixon**

At 9:27 p.m. Council reconvened the Regular Council Meeting.

RESULT:	**Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOVER:	**Councilmember Curney**
SECONDER:	**Mayor Pro-Tem Miller**

B. Consider any action(s), if necessary, based on decision(s) made in Executive Session.

None

C. Council to consider approval of the Executive Session Affidavit & Minutes dated 04/06/26.

RESULT:	**Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOVER:	**Councilmember Curney**
SECONDER:	**Mayor Pro-Tem Miller**

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

RESULT:	**Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOVER:	**Councilmember Fox**
SECONDER:	**Councilmember Messick**

Dr. Donya L. Sartor, Mayor

Shandrella Jewett, City Clerk