CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

AUGUST 04, 2025 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

- Mayor Donya L. Sartor
- Mayor Pro-Tem Tracey Messick
- Councilmember Alfred Dixon
- Councilmember Don Dixon
- Councilmember Bobby Lester
- Councilmember Asjah Miller (Left meeting at 7:53 p.m.) (via phone in Executive Session)
- Councilmember Billy Powell (Absent)
- City Clerk, Shandrella Jewett
- City Attorney, David Dreyer
- Downtown Development Manager, Andrew Simpson
- Economic Development Manager, Faith Akuta
- Finance Director, Donnetta Cannady
- Police Chief, Christopher Cato
- Public Works Director, Marcus Heard

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

Presentation:
Letter B. was removed - Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) Project

New Business:
Letter D. was removed - Council to consider approval of a partial fee waiver for use of Lee Street Park by Tabernacle of Praise Church International.

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

IV. PRESENTATIONS

A. Jonesboro Youth City Government Swearing-In Ceremony

Councilmember A. Dixon shared that this is the third year of swearing-in the next generation of leaders. He acknowledged the parents/guardians for their support.

At this time, Councilmember A. Dixon welcomed the second JYCG Mayor, Danielle Avitia. She spoke regarding her experience with JYCG and shared that this was her last year serving as a JYCG member.

At this time, each member introduced themselves.

Youth Councilmembers and Directors:

- Rylyn Allen (9th Grade - Mt. Zion High School)
- Mariam Diallo (10th Grade - Charles Drew High School)
- Sdyney Washington (10th Grade - Jonesboro High School)
- Madison Hall (9th Grade - M.E. Stilwell School of the Arts) JYCG Director of Events
- Eveyon Maldonado (9th Grade - Mt. Zion High School)
- Matthew Hall (9th Grade - (M.E. Stilwell School of the Arts)
- Mason White (9th Grade - Morrow High School). JYCG City Manager
- Cedrick Lemons (11th Grade - Jr. Mundy's Mills High School) JYCG Director of Community Service
- Miranda Gutierrez (9th Grade – M.E. Stilwell School of the Arts)
- Jacqueline Alvarado (9th Grade - Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School)
- Mackenzie Newlove (10th Grade - Home School via Pensacola Christian Academy
- Stephanie Ezenne (12th Grade - Jonesboro High School)
- Sariyah Robinson (9th Grade - Morrow High School)
- Zahion Mikell (10th Grade – Mt. Zion High School)

JYCG Mayor, Zahion Mikell (Mt. Zion High School) extended warm greetings and congratulated each scholar for joining JYCG. He stated that he is proud to serve JYCG with passion, dignity, and respect. JYCG are the next leaders of America.

Isaac Hathway (JYCG past Mayor Pro-Tem) will be attending Albany State University. He welcomed Chief Magistrate Judge Keish Wright-Hill to the podium to administer the oath to all JYCG members.

Chief Magistrate Judge Wright-Hill delivered a powerful message to the JYCG members. She encouraged them to remember the community they grew up in and to return by using the knowledge, experience, and training they will gain to make their community a better place.

At this time Chief Magistrate Judge Wright-Hill administered the oath and congratulated the JYCG members. Danielle Avitia provided closing remarks and encouraged the JYCG members to embrace their roles as young leaders in the community.

B. ~~Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) Project~~ (Stricken from the Agenda)

C. Mayor's Budget Presentation

Mayor Sartor provided a presentation regarding the FY 26 Budget and Millage Rate. She discussed the following topics:

- Millage Rate - It's how the property is taxed.
- 2024 Notice of Property Tax Increase – In 2024 the City advertised 14 mills, but 8.5 mills was approved.
- 2024 Tax Digest and 5-Year History of Levy – State requires a 5-year history.
- General Fund Revenues – Majority of revenue comes from property taxes.
- 2019 Mid-year retreat.
- Bonds and SPLOTS.
- Minimum wage was increased from $15 to $19 per hour.
- Staff needs a cost-of-living raise.
- Capital Improvement Plan.
- Public Works Department fleet.

- Park renovations.
- Charter requires that the budget includes debt service
- Governing body's plan to pay the City Center building – In the past, a plan was created to pay down the debt service.
- Current debt is $617,002.00
- City had opted in to HB 581
- The City's current budget is at about $9 million and $4.5 million should be kept in savings.
- SPLOST

Mayor Sartor asked the citizens if they had any questions. She provided answers to their questions.

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

- True Rider Motorcycle Club (City limits of Jonesboro, Georgia). Cedrick Mack spoke on behalf of the club as members. He stated that they are a community focused, family-oriented motorcycle club and their core values are centered around brotherhood, community service, and promoting a positive image of bikers in society. The club has organized charity rides, back-to-school events, and neighborhood clean-ups. True Rider Motorcycle Club requested support and approval to have a designated place to meet within the City of Jonesboro. He stated their North Main Street address was approved two (2) years ago. However, they will be seeking approval of the new location (9531 South Main Street).

- Robin Raul – Spoke regarding the millage rate and the senior population. Like for the Council to consider not only the City Center, parks, and staff, but those that want to stay in the City of Jonesboro, Georgia.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING

None

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Council to discuss FY 2026 Budget.

Mayor Sartor stated, "if we do a millage rate, it needs to be based on the needs of the City's budget." The current proposed budget for FY 26 would require an 11 millage rate.

Councilmember D. Dixon said the current millage rate is at 8.5 mills. The value of the houses is going up tremendously (which comes from the County). He stated he is okay with increasing the millage rate to 9 mills and "to see if the City can work something out in order to keep the budget where we need it, and to help the senior citizens of the City, and pay the minimum amount of taxes as possible."

Mayor Sartor said she asked Ms. Karen Slaton-Dixon to create a budget based on 11 mills which would cover the debt service, elimination of about 12 positions, 2% cost-of-living raise, and $500,000.00 in contingency. From the $500,000.00 in contingency, the City would remove the deficient amount of $200,000.00 which would leave the City with $300,000.00.

Capital Expenses:
Mayor Sartor shared that the increase in the millage rate is for maintaining a quality of service. She stated, "what i was asking for would help with Capital Expenses such as":

- Public Works Department – Key vehicles that are currently used for service (8 vehicles are out of service).
- There are seven (7) vehicles that are utilized on a daily basis, with ages ranging from 17-32 years old.
- Chipper truck (1993), Bucket Truck, Small Sanitation Truck, Large Sanitation Truck,
- Back-hoe

- Water truck
- A/C Repairs

Parks:
Massingale and Battleground Park – Capital improvements are needed.

Ms. Slaton-Dixon provided the following updated information to Mayor and Council. She stated that she re-did the numbers based on 8.5 mills with nothing in contingency. Debt service would be covered, no funding for the 14 positions that were put on hold. A 2% increase for staff would be included.

- 9 mills with debt service included would give $112,000.00 extra in the budget.
- 9.5 mills would gives an extra $224,000.00.
- 10 mills would give an extra $336,000.00.
- 11 mills with leaving everything the same, would give an extra $560,000.00 (this would allow the city to purchase the bucket truck and fund some of the 14 positions that were put on hold.

Ms. Slaton-Dixon recommended that the City create a Capital Improvement Plan so that the City do not have to go into the reserve.

Councilmember Miller spoke on integrity and how the previous Council had a plan to increase the millage rate incrementally. She also spoke regarding the 14 positions, services provided to the residents, the park, and the proposed budget.

Mayor Sartor asked Council if they had any further discussion, and there were none.

Councilmember D. Dixon suggested that Council review the budget and identify areas for reduction. Mayor Sartor read Sec. 2.27 of the Charter re. The Mayor is to prepare and submit to the council a recommended budget. Mayor Sartor asked Council what they would like to see changed.

Councilmember Miller said she is not comfortable doing under 10 mills. However, she is okay with 11 mills and to go into the reserve so that the City don't over burden the residents; and to keep the appropriate staff needed so services don't decline. The City will still need to go up next year.

Director Heard (Public Works Department) spoke regarding the key things they don't have. He spoke about Community Engagement. The citizens are concerned about quality, and they don't understand that the City doesn't have street sweepers. They need equipment, but the City is at a standstill.

Mayor Sartors asked what cuts Council would like to make. Mayor Pro-Tem Messick asked for more time to review the proposed FY 26 Budget. Councilmember Miller said she respects the fact that Council may need more time, however, to keep in mind that the millage rate must be set by August 25, 2025.

Mayor Sartor asked Councilmember D. Dixon what he would like to cut. He spoke about the City paying 100% of the staff health insurance premium and regarding property insurance and group insurance. Mayor Sartor asked Council if they wanted to cut salaries, positions, travel, uniforms, etc. Council agreed to keep the 2% raise for staff, keep staff at 100% of premium being paid by the City. Councilmember D. Dixon said he would be prepared to provide budget cuts by the next Council meeting.

Mayor Sartor asked Council to come to the Budget Meeting (#3) on August 7, 2025, with specific budget items they believe should be eliminated from the FY 26 proposed budget.

Councilmember Lester agreed. Councilmember Miller confirmed that the only difference from the proposed budget received today, and the one received on July 25, 2025 was the salary cuts and the healthcare offset. Therefore, she doesn't have any items to cut from the proposed budget. Ms. Slaton-Dixon agreed to the changes along with contingency being increased. Councilmember Miller said she can attend phone. Mayor Pro-Tem Messick and Councilmember A. Dixon said they would be present as well.

A motion was made for a Special Called Budget Meeting for Thursday, August 7, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

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

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Council to discuss Conditional Use Permit Application #25-CUP-006, submitted by Danny Orr. The request is for a community assembly hall, retail space, and an apothecary that will also serve coffee and light fair. The property is located at 154 South Main Street, Jonesboro, Georgia 30236, parcel 13241D E001. (Staff is recommending approval with Conditions).

Faith Akuta led the discussion. There were no questions or comments.

B. Council to discuss Conditional Use Permit Application #25-CUP-007, submitted by Tsunami Volleyball, Inc. The request is to operate a non-profit volleyball recreation facility engaging primarily in youth instruction, league play, and tournaments. The property is located at 7776 Jonesboro Road, Suite 100, Jonesboro, Georgia 30236, parcel 12049C D002. (Staff is recommending approval with Conditions).

Faith Akuta led the discussion. Mayor Sartor asked how long the tournaments would last. Ms. Akuta said the applicant's Letter of Intent reads 4-5 days per year. Mayor Sartor asked if it could be 4-5 days instead of 4-5 tournaments.

The following topics were discussed:

- Parking
- Traffic control on the street.
- Public Safety – Mayor Pro-Tem and Chief Cato said there needs to be a safety plan in place
- Mayor Sartor advised Tsunami Vollebally, Inc. to give the City time to allow the Police Chief to implement a public safety plan.
- Mayor Sartor said there should be no caps on the number of events.

C. Council to consider approval of the proposed revisions made to Jonesboro Youth City Government Charter (Article II, Sec. 33-2), to ensure consistency throughout the document.

Councilmember A. Dixon led the discussion. This is the third year of the JYCG Program. He expressed his gratitude to Mayor and Council for their continued support in the youth. He stated the language in the current Charter reads Jonesboro Youth City Council. However, he would like for it to read Jonesboro Youth City Government. He stated that other changes were made in regard to quorums and qualifications for the members.

The item was added to Old Business for July 11, 2025 Council Meeting.

D. ~~Council to consider approval of a partial fee waiver for use of Lee Street Park by Tabernacle of Praise Church International.~~ (The item was stricken from the Agenda.)

E. Council to consider approval of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the redevelopment of Key Street Park.

Councilmember A. Dixon led the discussion.

Mayor Sartor asked Councilmember A. Dixon who was going to pay for the park. He stated funding options may include private partnership, grants, and City's budget allocation. Mayor Sartor recommended revisiting this item at a later time. Currently, the City has two other parks that needs renovating and would need Capital money to improve the new one. She is not opposed to revitalizing Key Street Park and will not support an RFP at this time. Lastly, she stated, "need to maintain the parks that we already have and see how the budget looks first."

Councilmember Miller inquired about the cost of fixing Key Street Park. Mayor Sartor said an outline of what is needed to fix the park would be required. However, Mayor and Council would need to come together first, and decide on the vision for the park.

F. Council to consider approval of the proposed expansion for the Arts and Entertainment District.

Councilmember A. Dixon led the discussion. He stated, "to permit the gas station, include the parcels facing Main Street from Spring Street and Main Street to North Avenue, include the Community Garden, and the Exxon Gas Station that is located on the corner.

Mayor Sartor said she would get with the following departments: Community Development, Downtown Development, and Economic Development since there is a process the City would have to go through. She asked Councilmember A. Dixon to meet with Mr. Simpson and Mrs. Akuta regarding this item.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

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

At 7:52 p.m. a motion was made to enter into Executive Session.

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

At 8:20 p.m., a motion was made to reconvene the Work Session.

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

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

None

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

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

Dr. Donya L. Sartor, Mayor

Shandrella Jewett, City Clerk