CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

FEBRUARY 10, 2025 AT 6:05 PM

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

MINUTES

I. CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:21 p.m. by Mayor Sartor.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called by City Manager Miller-Thornton

Present:

- Mayor Donya L. Sartor
- Mayor Pro-Tem Tracey Messick
- Councilmember Alfred Dixon
- Councilmember Don Dixon
- Councilmember Billy Lester
- Councilmember Asjah Miller
- Councilmember Billy Powell
- City Manager, ChaQuias Miller-Thornton
- City Attorney, David Dreyer
- Interim City Clerk, Shandrella Jewett
- Assistant Chief of Police, Audrey Dunlap
- Finance Director, Cynthia Hammond
- Downtown Main Street Manager, Andrew Simpson
- Public Works Director, Marcus Heard

Absent:

- Chief of Police, Todd Coyt

III. INVOCATION

Introduction of Pastor Robert Taylor as the Jonesboro Police Department Chaplain.

Invocation by Pastor Robert Taylor.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

V. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

A. Council to approve and adopt the amended Agenda.

Old Business – Council made letter A. Discussion of Forensic Audit as a new item. The remaining items were re-alphabetized.

New Business – Council made letter A. Discussion of Benefits for Elected Official as a new item. The remaining items were re-alphabetized.

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

VI. MAYOR'S PRESENTATION

- Mayor and Council thanked staff, the community, the family of Mrs. ChaQuias Miller-Thornton, and everyone for attending the Community Welcome Reception and Appointment Ceremony of City Manager, ChaQuias Miller-Thornton.

  Acknowledgment regarding a Proclamation officially announcing the September 2024 appointment of Mrs. ChaQuias Miller-Thornton as City Manager for the City of Jonesboro, Georgia. Mrs. ChaQuias Miller-Thornton having satisfactorily completed the 90-day working test period.

- Presentation of Awards based on training completed through Georgia Municipal Association.
  Councilmember Powell - Certificate of Distinction
  Councilmember D. Dixon - Certificate of Recognition
  Mayor Pro-Tem Messick - Certificate of Recognition

VII. PRESENTATIONS

A. Performance by Kay R. Pace School of the Arts and Recognition of Clayton County School Board Representative, Mary Baker.

Mayor Sartor shared Kay R. Pace School of the Arts upcoming performances and encouraged everyone to attend.

- School Performance - 02/20/2025 at 10:00 a.m. & 12:00 p.m.
- School Performance - 02/21/2025 at 10:30 a.m.
- Public Performance - 02/21/2025 at 1:00 p.m.
- Public Performance - 02/22/2025 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

B. Swearing-in Ceremony of the Board Members to the Ethics Committee.

- Arlene Charles and Chelsey Curney were sworn-in by Judge Wood.
- Larry Jones was absent and will be sworn-in on Wednesday, February 26, 2025.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Public Hearing regarding Alcohol Beverage Pouring License Application #25-ALC-001 to dispense beer, wine & distilled spirits at 265 Jonesboro Road, Jonesboro, Georgia 30236. The legal business name is Ray's Place Where Chicago Meets Atlanta. Kelly J. Epps has requested to be the License Representative.

Public Hearing Opened

Applicant/Owner (Kelly J. Epps) introduced herself to the Mayor and City Councilmembers.

Public Hearing Closed

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

- Meia Ballinger - Spoke on behalf of parents raising kids by themselves and the need for affordable summer programs. Hosting an event at Chuckie Cheese on March 28, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. at 335 Upper Riverdale Road, Jonesboro, GA.
- Chelsey Curney - Spoke in favor of elected officials receiving health benefits.
- Ron Henley - Spoke in favor of elected officials receiving health benefits.
- Arlene Charles – Requested clarification regarding elected officials being able to receive health benefits. Clarification was provided.
- Helen Meadows - Spoke in favor of elected officials receiving health benefits.

X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Council to consider approval of the Minutes from January 13, 2025 Caucus Meeting.

A motion was made to table the Minutes from January 13, 2025 Caucus Meeting until March 10, 2025 Council Meeting.

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

B. Council to consider approval of the Minutes from January 13, 2025 Regular Council Meeting.

A motion was made to table the Minutes from the January 13, 2025 Regular Council Meeting until March 10, 2025 Council Meeting.

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

XI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

A. Economic Development Report by Downtown Main Street Manager, Andrew Simpson.

City Manager Miller-Thornton extended congratulatory remarks to Mr. Simpson for doing a great job representing Jonesboro's Main Street Program during last Tuesday's accreditation meeting in Newnan, Georgia. At the end of the presentation it was announced that the City of Jonesboro had received accreditation as a Classic Main Street Community. City Managr Miller-Thornton, Tammary Scott (Chair), and former Chair (Karen Sullivan) attended the meeting.

Mr. Simpson provided a brief report and shared the following information which can be found on the City's website at www.jonesboroga.gov.

- Show our City of Jonesboro businesses some love on February 10-14, 2025. "The City will be recognizing your love for the City of Jonesboro businesses, with our Pop Up Posse."

XII. FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Financial Report by Finance Director, Cynthia Hammond.

Finance Director Hammond provided a brief report regarding the following:

- Currently have nine (9) out of twelve (12) bank accounts reconciled.
- Payroll for FY24 has been completed and current
- Uploaded the FY25 Budget
- Focused on getting the group health insurance benefits posted and uploaded

Mayor Pro-Tem Messick requested a hard copy of the current Finance Report and would like for Council to receive a monthly report going forward. Finance Director Hammond said she will provide a Trial Balance for January 2025 and would e-mail it to the Mayor and Council.

XIII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Council to consider a Proposed Revised Fee Schedule for use of the Jonesboro City Center Community Room.

A motion was made to approve and adopt the Consent Agenda.

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

XIV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Discussion regarding a Forensic Audit.

City Manager Miller-Thornton led the discussion.

A discussion took place among the Mayor and Council regarding the cost of a forensic audit and any allegations that would cause for a forensic audit. Mayor Sartor recommended Council review any and all documents (including credit card statements) and present any questions they may have to City Manager Miller-Thornton.

B. Council to consider Georgia House Bill 581/O.C.G.A. 48-5-44.2 Homestead Exemption Provisions. (Intent to Opt Out of Homestead Exemption.)

A motion was made to Opt Out of Homestead Exemption regarding Georgia House Bill 581/O.C.G.A. 48-5-44.2 Homestead Exemption Provisions.

RESULT: **Motion did not pass (Vote 2 to 2; 1 Abstained)**
MOVER: **Councilmember Miller**
SECONDER: **Councilmember A. Dixon**
AYES: **Councilmembers A. Dixon and Miller**
NAYS: **Councilmembers D. Dixon and Powell**
ABSTAIN: **Councilmember Lester**

At this time, Mayor Sartor requested a roll call vote to Opt Out of Georgia House Bill 581.

RESULT: **Denied (Vote 4 to 3)**
AYES: **Mayor Sartor; Councilmembers Miller and A. Dixon**
NAYES: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick; Councilmembers D. Dixon, Lester, and Powell**

For clarity purposes a motion was made to Opt In to Georgia House Bill 581.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote 4 to 3)**
MOVER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick**
SECONDER: **Councilmember D. Dixon**
AYES: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick; Councilmembers D. Dixon, Lester, and Powell**
NAYS: **Mayor Sartor; Councilmembers A. Dixon and Miller**

C. Council to consider approval of Alcohol Beverage Pouring License Application #25-ALC-001 to dispense beer, wine & distilled spirits at 265 Jonesboro Road, Jonesboro, Georgia 30236. The legal business name is Ray's Place Where Chicago Meets Atlanta. Kelly J. Epps has requested to be the License Representative.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote 5 to 1)**
MOVER: **Councilmember Powell**

SECONDER: **Councilmember D. Dixon**
AYES: **Councilmembers A. Dixon, D. Dixon, Lester, Miller, and Powell**
NAYS: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick**

D. Council to consider a Proposed Compensation Plan/Incentives for Jonesboro Police Department.

City Manager Miller-Thornton spoke regarding the recruitment sign-on bonus in the amount of $7,500.00. A portion of the bonus would be presented at six (6) months of employment ($3,750.00) and the other half ($3,750.00) would be presented at twelve (12) months and one (1) day of employment. Council recommended a tier sign-on bonus based on years of completed service.

A motion was made to approve the sign-on bonus in the amount of $7,500.00 with the Police Department.

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

A motion was made to table the retention plan/bonus discussion until it is cleared with Legal.

RESULT: **Vote not completed**
MOVER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick**
SECONDER: **Councilmember Lester**

A motion was made to increase the recruitment bonus from $500.00 to $1,000.00 for any employee of the City of Jonesboro that refers/recruit a Police Officer along with the stipulations discussed.

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

A motion was made to consider the retention bonus as a one-time bonus for existing full-time Police Officers with no stipulation. It would go into effect on the next pay period, February 24, 2025.

- Tier 1: 1-3 years of completed sercive to the City of Jonesboro ($3,500.00)
- Tier 2: 4-6 years of completed service to the City of Jonesboro ($5,000.00)
- Tier 3: 7+ years of competed service to the City of Jonesboro ($7,500.00)

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

XV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Council to consider health benefits for Elected Officials.

A motion was made to table the item until the next Council Meeting.

RESULT: **Denied (4 to 2)**
MOVER: **Councilmember A. Dixon**
SECONDER: **Councilmember Miller**
AYES: **Councilmember A. Dixon and Miller**
NAYS: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick; Councilmembers D. Dixon, Lester, and Powell**

A discussion took place regarding health benefits for elected offficials.

Councilmember Miller stated, "for the record, I was not a Councilmember during the time this matter was originally voted upon."

Mayor Pro-Tem Messick requested City Attorney Dreyer to create a resolution or ordinance that gives clarity to the fact that elected officials do not qualify for employee benefits.

Mayor Sartor clarified whether the wording should include the word "qualify". She instructed City Attorney Dreyer to make sure the wording is clear and not indicative that qualifications are a consideration in whether benefits are provided.

A motion was made for City Attorney Dreyer to create a resolution that would discontinue the Mayor's existing health insurance benefits and that no elected official should receive benefits.

Point of Personal Privilege by Mayor Pro-Tem Messick. She spoke regarding the process of receiving or not recieivng health benefits outside of salary. She instructed City Attorney Dreyer to include in resolution that all elected officials of the City will not accept benefits from the City outside of salary.

Councilmember Powell asked City Attorney Dreyer about retirement benefits. City Attorney Dreyer presented that salary and retirement will be preserved as benefits afforded to Mayor and Council.

At this time, Mayor Sartor requested a roll call vote regarding above-mentioned motion.

AYES: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick; Councilmembers D. Dixon, Lester, and Powell**
NAYS: **Councilmembers A. Dixon and Miller**

Councilmember Miller asked City Attorney Dreyer to provide information regarding elected officials (in other cities) that are receiving health benefits. Mayor Sartor requested a fee structure regarding the costs for health benefits.

RESULT: **Approved (4 to 2)**
MOVER: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick**
SECONDER: **Councilmember Powell**
AYES: **Mayor Pro-Tem Messick; Councilmembers D. Dixon, Lester, and Powell**
NAYS: **Councilmembers A. Dixon and Miller**

B. Spring Fling Concert - April 26, 2025

Council to consider an agreement between the City of Jonesboro, Georgia and Upscale Band AKA A1 Party Band and Smooth Jazz Ensemble.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOTION: **Councilmember Miller**
SECONDER: **Councilmember D. Dixon**

Council to consider an agreement between the City of Jonesboro, Georgia and The Show Business.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOTION: **Councilmember Miller**
SECONDER: **Councilmember Lester**

Mayor Pro-Tem Messick said she would be happy to assist with the planning of the 4th of July event.

C. Introduction of Staff Liaison and Roles

Councilmember A. Dixon provided a brief update.

- 2025 budget update to reflect grants and donations received in 2024.
- Chaperone Announcements: All JYCG chaperones have successfully completed their background checks.
- Confirmed Chaperones: Cameron Dixon, Salima Lankford, and Susan Taylor
- GMA Youth Forum Update: JYCG members are registered to attend the GMA Youth Forum taking place February 28, 2025 to March 2, 2025.
- JYCG Meeting: Held on the third Monday of each month at the Jonesboro City Center.
- Requested use of IT services for live-streaming of JYCG monthly meetings. Services to be paid by JYCG. Mayor Sartor said she will get back with Councilmember A. Dixon regarding this matter.

Councilmember A. Dixon thanked Mayor, Council, and everyone for pouring into the youth. He stated that City Clerk Jewett would be providing administrative support for JYCG. City Manager Miller-Thornton asked Council A. Dixon to provide a list of the administrative support tasks that are needed.

Mayor Sartor asked Councilemember A. Dixon for a list of chaperones, JYCG parental contact information, phone numbers, and e-mails. City Manager Miller-Thornton said all chaperones need to take a training and supervising class by February 28, 2025 for insurance compliance.

XVI. REPORT OF CITY MANAGER

A. City Manager's Report

- RFP regarding a Forensic Auditor
- RFP 2025-001 for Profession Legal Service City Attorney
- Met with the Federal Policy Council for Georgia Cities Summit on 1/26/25 regarding Protection of Tax Exempt Status for Municipal Bonds
- The Mayor's Office in conjunction with the Administration Office are working on several grant opportunities (Local Maintenance Improvement Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and the Home Grant)
- Working through audit scenarios as presented by Finance Director
- City Clerk Jewett and I are working collectively on a schedule that allow us to be able to distribute the agenda packets to Mayor and Council a week in advance of the meeting.
- Mayor Sartor and City Manager Miller-Thornton were elected to the National League of Cities Congressional Small Cities Council
- Thanked Mayor and Council for the event tonight

XVII. REPORT OF CITY COUNCILMEMBERS

Comments by Councilmember D. Dixon:

- Thanked everyone for showing up tonight. and drive safe going home

Comments by Councilmember Miller:

- Thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for staying
- Encouraged everyone to think of the entire city from babies to senior citizens

Comments by Councilmember Lester:

- Thanked Public Works and the Police Department for their quick response and due diligence in regard to a tree that fell on Cloud Street.
- Thanked all employees for all of their hard work

Comments by Councilmember A. Dixon:

- Thanked everyone for pouring into the youth and for sharing their comments.
- Happy Valentines Day

XVIII. REPORT OF MAYOR

- Spoke regarding the clock on the building being fixed by Spring Fling
- Thanked the Board Members for being a part of the Ethics Committee
- Election coming up in November 2025
- Declaration of Intent can be submitted
- Mayor Sartor was elected to the National League of Cities Congressional Small Cities Council
- Mayor Sartor was appointed to NLC REAL (Race, Equity, and Leadership Council)
- Mayor Sartor serve on the Board of Directors as a representative for the National Black Caucus of Elected Officials (NBCLO) Region 16
- Congratulatory remarks extended to Council for obtaining their designation

XIX. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation, real estate, or personnel matters.

None

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

None

XX. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

RESULT: **Approved (Vote was unanimous)**
MOTION: **Councilmember Powell**
SECONDER: **Councilmember D. Dixon**

Dr. Donya L. Sartor, Mayor

Shandrella Jewett, Interim City Clerk