CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

DECEMBER 01, 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 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called by City Clerk Jewett.

- Mayor Donya L. Sartor
- Mayor Pro-Tem Tracey Messick
- Councilmember Alfred Dixon
- Councilmember Don Dixon
- Councilmember Bobby Lester
- Councilmember Asjah Miller
- Councilmember Billy Powell
- City Attorney, David Dreyer
- City Clerk, Shandrella Jewett
- Community Development Interim Director, Faith Akuta
- Finance Director, Donnette 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.

The following was added to the Agenda.

Mayor Sartor added a letter into the record under Item C. Old Business – Council to discuss the investigation concerning the Ordinance #2025-008 that was signed on 10/22/25.

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

IV. MAYOR'S PRESENTATIONS

Acknowledgement of a new staff member, Investigator Arlis Gwyn.

V. PRESENTATIONS

None

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

Lance VanDyke (Jonesboro Business Owner) – Spoke regarding his business property and the change to the Historic Gateway. He asked if there is something the City can do for him in order to prevent him from selling the property or pursuing litigation. He further stated that the change has a dramatic effect on his property values.

Santia Fox (Jonesboro Resident) – Spoke regarding DDA being scheduled to have a meeting on Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. Looking for more participation from the Community

VII. PUBLIC HEARING

None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Council to consider an agreement between the City of Jonesboro, Georgia, and Falcon Design Consultants, LLC for Comprehensive Construction Project Management Services related to 100 Gloria Drive Project (Public Works Building).

RESULT: ADDED TO THE CONSENT AGENDA 12/08/25

B. Council to discuss FY 26 Proposed Budget.

Mayor Pro-Tem Messick asked for a financial report. Finance Director Cannaday said she would provide a report to Council by tomorrow. It would include the budget balance and percentage of budget. However, she is not able to provide a balance sheet until 2025 bank reconciliations are completed.

Councilmember A. Dixon asked if there were any changes to JYCG budget. Mayor Sartor said she kept it at $4,000.00 for FY 26. He stated, "I would like to see that go back up to $8,800.00." Mayor Sartor shared why it would remain at $4,000.00.

Mayor Pro-Tem Messick asked about line items 26 and 27 - Office Supplies and Miscellaneous Supplies. Finance Director Cannady said the line items are already designated.

C. Council to discuss the investigation concerning the Ordinance signed on 10/22/25.

Mayor Sartor asked Council if they had any discussions or comments concerning this matter. No one responded.

At this time, Mayor Sartor placed a statement into the official record regarding serious procedural violations that have occurred with the governance of the City and the legal implications that follow from them. (See attachment).

She asked Council if they had any questions.

Mayor Pro-Tem Messick stated that all proper steps were followed in proceeding with the investigation and that council had discussion and a unanimous vote to move forward with this investigation before anyone was contacted to begin this investigation. She asked for a copy of the statement/letter that was read into the record.

The following discussions took place between the Mayor and Council:

- Email timeframe regarding the Letter of Engagement
- The scope listed in Ordinance #2025-008
- Email that City Council received from Attorney Phillip Friduss of Hall Booth Smith, P.C. (dated 11/12/25) detailing the 34 items requested

- Cost of research and bill(s) from Attorney Friduss
- Cost for the full scope of the investigation ranging from $50,000.00 to $100,000.00 (could go into the lower or higher range), per 11/12/25 letter from Attorney Friduss
- No cap has been placed on the cost of the investigation
- Insurance Claim. The City's Budget related to the investigation
- Mentioned some of the 34 items that Attorney Friduss requested
- Spoke regarding conversations between Attorney Friduss and Mayor Pro-Tem regarding information shared beyond the scope
- The need for legal counsel to be voted on and appointed to represent staff as they are interviewed for the investigation
- Attorney Fees regarding the filings
- Cost to pay someone to redact confidential information, personnel time, attorney client privilege, and unrelated information
- Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) to halt the investigation until the City can get clear guidelines on the scope, get an attorneys in place, a quote on how much it would cost.

Councilmember Miller stated that several requests from Attorney Friduss falls outside the agreed timeframe and scope, constituting a clear violation of the established guidelines. She added, "I don't want him to continue raking in money outside of what we've asked him for." Mayor Sartor read Ordinance #2025-008 that was signed on 10/22/25. Councilmember Miller asked if Council would consider pausing the investigation until someone speaks to Hall Booth Smith, P.C.

City Attorney Dreyer said any time there are allegations found or unfound, he would have a conflict because he represents the City. Therefore, he cannot get involved. However, he stated that he asked for the scope because that pertains to all of Council. The reply he received from Attorney Friduss was that in his experience, it would run $50,000.00 to $100,000.00. It could go beyond $100,000.00. Mayor Sartor said what Attorney Friduss has asked and requested is so far beyond the particular scope that was signed. The purpose of the ordinance was to clearly define the scope.

Mayor Sartor mentioned that at some point, "we need to vote on and appoint legal counsel to represent staff as they are interviewed for this investigation." Mayor asked Council if they wanted to approve it tonight. No response from Council.

At this time, Mayor Sartor said she would entertain a vote to legally halt the investigation until we can work through all of these things and get some parameters on money because right now he is going forward at $50,000.00 to $100,000.00, and then, there would not be a TRO. She asked Council if there were any votes, motions, or anything to move forward.

Mayor Sartor asked City Attorney Dreyer who would contact Attorney Friduss to ensure he adheres to the agreed scope. She noted that Council could collectively decide to direct Attorney Friduss to focus solely on the ordinance, establish a financial, and allocate funds for an independent attorney to accompany staff as they are interviewed.

Mayor Pro-Tem Messick asked for a copy of the email that City Attorney Dreyer and the Mayor received from Attorney Friduss because she noted that she had not received anything. Mayor Sartor explained that it was received as an Open Records Request to the City Attorney and that is why she is sharing the information with Council. City Attorney Dreyer said he would forward the request to Council tonight via email along with sending the ordinance to Attorney Friduss.

Councilmember Miller said she wanted to make a motion but wanted to get the wording correct before actually making the motion. She said, "I'm going to make a motion to halt the

legal investigation until next week." That gives everybody a chance to read their emails and hopefully come up with creative solutions to the funding issues that may rise or that we may face as far as having someone to represent staff when they're being interviewed....and to pay for representation for people before they get interviewed. She further stated, "if we can't think of creative solutions for that, then she could make the motion at the next meeting."

Mayor Sartor clarified the motion by stating, "there's a motion on the floor to halt the investigative process from Hall Booth Smith immediately effective this evening, which means there can be no billable hours until we convene in a week. She told City Attorney Dreyer that he would have to notify Attorney Friduss tonight that Council voted to halt the investigative process that was a signed consent on October 22nd until further notice.

Mayor Sartor stated the ordinance should have been done as a resolution. City Attorney Dreyer said it could be done either way. Mayor Sartor replied that it clearly should have been a resolution and City Attorney agreed. She asked if a resolution could be made to the current ordinance so at least it can get on the right track at some point. She further stated that she doesn't want to keep doing an ordinance for something that should not have been an ordinance in the first place. She asked if an ordinance could be done tonight to halt the investigative process by Hall Booth Smith related to the formal Engagement Letter dated 10/22/25.

City Attorney Dreyer said the ordinance would be to halt the investigation for seven (7) days and in that time .....(changed to eight [8] days) to get a better sense of the budget and the scope of the investigation being in line with the ordinance that was drafted and passed by Council. Mayor Sartor stated that the ordinance would supersede the Engagement Letter because it was signed by Mayor and Council. The City Attorney agreed.

Councilmember Miller made the following motion.

A motion to have an ordinance to halt Hall Booth Smith, P.C. for eight (8) days to give Council time to review the document so that we can have a better sense of the scope of the investigation and the budget needs that may come from it.

City Attorney Dreyer stated, "there's been a good record of why we're doing this eight (8) day pause. He said he think it would just need a motion to pass an ordinance halting Hall Booth Smith, P.C. from doing the investigation for the next eight (8) days.

Councilmember Miller restated her motion by stating, "I would like to pass an ordinance to halt Hall Booth Smith, P.C. for the next eight (8) days."

Mayor Sartor said this would suspend the investigative process conducted by Hall Booth Smith as outlined in the Formal Engagement Letter dated October 22nd along with the signed Ordinance also dated on the same date for eight days. And this gives time for the attorney to send him a letter defining the scope and then also for the Council to decide how we're going to pay for this along with placing a cap on it. Once they put a cap on it, then we have to get with the finance person to find out where we want to pull the funds from.

RESULT: **Motion Failed for lack of a second**
MOVER: **Councilmember Miller**
SECONDER: **None**

Mayor Sartor asked Council, "how many of y'all interviewed with the attorney?" This question was asked due to the information that was in the letter of Attorney Friduss. She shared a sentence from the letter that read "the interviews are going well." She further

spoke about violation(s) of a standing settlement agreement per the Superior Court regarding matters that have already been discussed in court and resolved. She said based on the 34 items that the attorney requested, it leads her to believe that someone provided information outside of the scope of the investigation.

At this time, Mayor Pro-Tem Messick stated, "I feel like we should get the information that we have not had...and to have an opportunity to review that this week while he can continue his investigation...we can halt it next Monday." Mayor Sartor stated, "why can't we halt it now." "His investigation has been proven that it is outside of the scope." Mayor Pro-Tem Messick stated that she does not have that proof and Mayor Sartor replied we just read it to you.

Mayor Sartor made a motion to go into recess so that she could print all of the documents for Council to review.

RESULT: **Motion Failed for lack of a second**
MOVER: **Councilmember Miller**
SECONDER: **None**

Mayor Sartor stated, "I do not want you to investigate something that had already been investigated and that we've already paid $30,000.00 for a judge to say you can't do nothing with it."

Another motion was made to go into recess so that Mayor Sartor could print documents for Council to continue the conversation.

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

Mayor Sartor, for the record, asked Council if they had spoken to, communicated via email, via phone, and/or had direct conversation with anyone from Hall Booth Smith.

- Councilmember A. Dixon - No
- Councilmember Lester - No
- Councilmember Miller - No
- Councilmember D. Dixon - No
- Mayor Pro-Tem Messick - Yes
- Councilmember Powell - No

Mayor Sartor asked City Attorney Dreyer to send Attorney Friduss an email asking what council members had he spoken to. "Via email or Direct."

Mayor Sartor asked Council if they wanted to put a cap on Attorney Friduss services or on how much he could charge the City in the next eight (8) days.

Councilmember D. Dixon responded by saying, "No".

Mayor Sartor asked Council if they would approve funding for an attorney so that staff can participate in the investigation? Mayor said we would file a claim with Saville. Council did not respond.

Councilmember Miller said, "I don't want to make a motion to pay for an attorney for staff to talk to him until we have his scope defined or until we know that he understands his scope."

Mayor Sartor asked Council if they would do a three (3) day halt. She later told Attorney Dreyer not to worry about it and that a TRO would be filed and she would go from there.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Council to discuss 2026 Housing Commitments (Housing Leadership Academy, Atlanta Regional Commission).

Mayor Sartor stated that she participated in the Housing Leadership Academy with Atlanta Regional Commission and each city that participated is required to come up with housing commitments that we run by them. The housing commitments have to be approved. She advised that more information will be available for the next meeting.

RESULT: OLD BUSINESS 12/08/25

B. Council to consider a resolution regarding a budget transfer from Poll Workers ($10,000.00 GL #100-1500-52-3851) and Elections ($12,000.00 GL #100-1500-52-3410) to the Building & Facilities Maintenance (GL #100-1500-53-1171) in order to cover the cost of renovations at 173 Could Street that was previously approved by Council.

RESULT: CONSENT AGENDA 12/08/25

C. Council to discuss replacement of the digital signage at Lee Street Park.

RESULT: OLD BUSINESS 12/08/25

D. Council to discuss an ordinance regarding Lee Street Park Rules.

Police Chief Cato led the discussion and requested the hours be updated to read Dusk to Dawn. This would be done seasonally. Consistent rules and hours and would have a long list of park rules to discuss (example motor scooters, drones, etc.)

RESULT: CONSENT AGENDA 12/08/25

E. Council to consider a resolution regarding a budget transfer from Cemetery ($35,000.00 GL #100-4100-53-1800) and Other Professional Services ($20,000.00 GL #100-3200-52-1290) to Building & Facilities Maintenance (100-1500-53-1171) in order to cover cost of damages to signage at Lee Street Park.

RESULT: OLD BUSINESS 12/08/25

F. Council to consider Fee Schedule changes, relative to new State requirements regarding building permit fees.

Go into effect January 2026. This would be exactly the same fee schedule and would be in compliance. This is specific to Building Permits.

RESULT: CONSENT AGENDA 12/08/25.

G. Council to consider a renewal contract between Luminary MediaWorks and the City of Jonesboro, Georgia for IT Services.

Councilmember A. Dixon asked about JYCG meetings being online.

Mayor Sartor said this could possibly be a supplemental contract but would need to get with Mr. Tran for further discussion.

RESULT: CONSENT AGENDA 12/08/25.

H. Council to consider a contract between E & K Janitorial Services, LLC and the City of Jonesboro, Georgia for janitorial services.

RESULT: CONSENT AGENDA 12/08/25.

I. Council to consider South Main Street resurfacing project from the City limits to West Mill Street.

Public Works Director Heard led the discussion. On November 18, 2025, he was notified by Clayton County Department of Transportation that Atlanta Regional Commission had issued a Tip Solicitation. Clayton County Department of Transportation would be submitting Resurfacing Projects for FY 27. Under this solicitation, South Main Street had been identified by Clayton County as a roadway that meets the eligible requirements for the Resurfacing Program. As part of this submission, Clayton County is requesting that the City of Jonesboro commit to a 20% local match for the portion of South Main Street located between the City limits and West Mill Street. Estimated cost $453,505.75. However, they requested that the City round it up to $500,000.00, and the 20% match for the City would be $100,000.00 which would be due by next week.

This is a grant that would cover all but 10% of the total of our street prorated cost. This would be funds from fiscal year 26 through 27 because he said completion would be in 2027. Some of this funding would have to be 50/50.

A motion was made to approve the $100,000.00 commitment for the grant to be split between two (2) fiscal years (FY 26 and FY 27) with a commitment to find the funding.

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

J. Council to consider Employee Benefits for 2026.

Mrs. Wetherington (Operation/HR Department) led the discussion. She recommended that Mayor and Council approve the employee benefits information that was included in their Agenda Packet. She proposed the City pay 100% of employees' cost for medical and dental and 75% of any dependent, spouse, or children.

Open Enrollment for employees is December 11, 2025.

A motion was made to accept the employee insurance rates that was provided.

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

X. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation, real estate, or personnel matter(s).

None

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

None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

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

Dr. Donya L. Sartor, Mayor

Shandrella Jewett, City Clerk

12/1/25 Mtg.

Good evening.

I am placing the following statement into the official record because it concerns serious procedural violations that have occurred within the governance of this City and the legal implications that follow from them.

My legal team recently completed a review of documents dated October 22, 2025, which I have had in my possession but had not previously analyzed in full consultation with counsel. That review revealed that Councilmember Tracey Messick initiated an outside investigation into the Mayor's Office BEFORE any vote of the City Council and without any legal authority to do so.

The first document is the "Formal Engagement Letter," dated October 22, 2025, from Hall Booth Smith. In that letter, the law firm states that it has been retained to conduct *"an independent investigation into allegations recently made against Mayor Donya L. Sartor,"* and that it will investigate not only alleged financial concerns, but also "others' fiscal activities," conduct interviews of elected officials and City employees, review social media, expand the investigation based on new information, and treat this as an ongoing investigative process.

This engagement letter confirms, unequivocally, that a private law firm was hired to investigate the Mayor BEFORE any vote occurred, and that the scope of that investigation far exceeds the authority granted later that same day.

The second document is the "Signed Ordinance to Appoint an Independent Investigator," also dated October 22, 2025. This ordinance authorizes only a limited administrative review of financial transactions between the City and the Downtown Development Authority for fiscal year 2025, and only for the period January 1 to October 20, 2025. It does not authorize an investigation of the Mayor, an investigation of pre-2025 conduct, personnel matters, political allegations, social media, or any prior disputes.

Here is the procedural problem:

The ordinance was signed AFTER the engagement letter was already accepted.
The law firm was already retained.
The investigation was already underway.
And the scope of the engagement had already been defined, by one councilmember claiming to act on behalf of the entire council, not by the governing body acting lawfully.

This is a **direct violation of the City Charter**, which requires:

- A public meeting,
- A formal motion,
- A vote of the full Council, and
- Compliance with Article VII procedures

before any outside investigation may be appointed. None of that occurred. There was no meeting authorizing Tracy Messick to contact the law firm. There was no public vote approving retention of outside counsel prior to the engagement and no authority for a single council member to bind the city prior to the vote and no authorization for investigation of the mayor prior to the vote. This makes the engagement void and misuse of public funds.

Additionally, this process violates a binding order of the Superior Court of Clayton County. On January 8th, 2024, the court entered a final consent judgment and order which expressly prohibits the city council for taking any action in any form against the mayor based on prior law the prior loss and investigation or his finding. It also states that both the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and Clayton County District Attorney found no criminal wrongdoing of the mayor. Despite that, the engagement letter reveals that the law firm was instructed to revisit matters that predate 2025 and are tied directly to allegations addressed in the lawsuit investigation. This is a blatant violation of a standing court order from the Superior Court of Clayton County.

Regardless of how the investigation is labeled, whether it's ethics, administrative, physical, or otherwise, the implications are severe. Mayor Pro-Tem has acted outside her legal authority, engaged in outside counsel without a vote. Taxpayers' funds have been put at risk through an unauthorized contract. The scope of the investigation exceeds any lawful mandate and contradicts the ordinance passed later that same day.

The initiation of the investigation violates the final consent judgment. Any use of the loss and related materials is expressly prohibited. Any action based on pre2025 allegation is barred. The entire investigation process is legally compromised and procedurally invalid.

Because of these acts were undertaken without a vote, without legal authority, and in violation of a court order, I will be seeking a temporary restraining order to immediately halt all investigatory activity and to protect the city from unlawful expenditures and to enforce compliance with both the charter and the final consent judgment.

I'm also directing the following be preserved for legal review.

- All communications related to the engagement of Hall Booth Smith
- All communications between council members concerning the investigation
- All drafts, notes, invoices, records exchanged with the law firm
- Any materials relating to the Lawson investigation

This matter is not political.
This is a matter of law, governance, and compliance with judicial orders.

The citizens of Jonesboro deserve a government that acts within a lawful authority, that follows the Charter, and that respects the ruling of the Superior Court.

This statement is entered into the record to ensure full transparency and to preserve the factual basis for the legal action that must now follow.

H|B|S HALL BOOTH SMITH, P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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October 22, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Tracey Messick
Mayor Pro Tem
City of Jonesboro
tmessick@jonesboroga.gov

RE: Formal Engagement Letter

Dear Mrs. Messick:

This engagement letter responds to yours of this same date, requesting that Hall Booth Smith, P.C. (HBS) conduct an independent investigation into allegations that have recently been made against Mayor Donya L. Sartor involving purported financial irregularities. While your request does not so mention, we will also investigate others' fiscal activities during the ongoing investigation as the evidence may support. We accept the invitation under the terms set out herein.

This investigation will include interviews of elected officials, City employees, relevant witnesses, and perhaps others connected to the City's finances. As far as needed documentation, this will be an ongoing process, beginning with the first interview serving as the jumping off point. We will want to name an employee liaison to assist in the document retrieval process, and in the scheduling of witness interviews and the like.

We agree to provide a comprehensive report of our findings. We understand the City is currently being forensically audited. We propose that you allow HBS to rely on the findings of that audit, as it is likely we would have recommended such an audit take place.

We will perform legal services at the following rates:

Phil Friduss - $375 per hour
Amy Cowan - $350 per hour
Stuart Sumner $275 per hour
Alex Whittemore $175 per hour

Billing will be monthly, and professional services will be entered in increments of .1 of an hour. Other professionals from the Firm may be utilized, and you will be informed of the intent to utilize them prior to their performing services with respect to the investigation. HBS will bill the City monthly, and payments are due within 30 days after receipt of the invoice corresponding with the prior month's legal activities.

The Parties may terminate this agreement at any time with 30 days' notice.

We are honored to be considered for this project. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

HALL BOOTH SMITH, P.C.

/s/ Phillip Friduss

Phillip E. Friduss

cc:	Mayor Donya Sartor	dsartor@jonesboroga.gov
	Mr. Alfred Dixon, Councilman	adixon@jonesboroga.gov
	Mr. Don Dixon, Councilman	ddixon@jonesboroga.gov
	Mr. Bobby Lester, Councilman	blester@jonesboroga.gov
	Ms. Asiah Miller, Councilwoman	amiller@jonesboroga.gov
	Ms. Tracey Messick, Councilwoman	tmessick@jonesboroga.gov
	Mr. Billy Powell, Councilman	bpowell@jonesboroga.gov
10/27/25	Attorney David Dreyer, City Attorney	david@dreyerfirm.com