CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

MARCH 02, 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 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called by City Clerk Jewett.

- Mayor Donya L. Sartor (Left Meeting 6:18 p.m. & Returned 6:33 p.m.)
- Mayor Pro-Tem Asjah Miller (Absent)
- Councilmember Chelsey Curney
- Councilmember Alfred Dixon
- Councilmember Cameron Dixon (Left Meeting 6:41 p.m. & Returned 6:44 p.m.; Left Meeting 7:45 p.m. & Returned 7:48 p.m.)
- Councilmember Santia Fox
- Councilmember Tracey Messick
- City Attorney, LaTonya Wiley
- City Clerk, Shandrella Jewett
- Community Development Director, Faith Akuta (Arrived 6:23 p.m.)
- Downtown Development Authority Director/Economic Development Manager, Blue Cole
- Finance Director, Karen Slaton-Dixon
- Operation/Human Resource, Maria Wetherington
- Police Chief, Christopher Cato (Absent)
- Police Sergeant Jasmine Williams
- Public Works Director, Marcus Heard (Arrived 6:02 p.m.)

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

Please note the following amendments:

Items Removed:

- Teacher of the Year Recognition under section IV. Mayor's Presentation
- Item B. under section VII. New Business. Council to discuss variance request **#26-VAR-001** submitted by Max Kovtoun and David McKenney for properties located at 262 and 294 South Main Street (Parcels # 06032A B002, 06032A B002Z, 06032A B003, & 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 of a variance to encroach upon the required stream buffer to allow for the proposed development. (Staff requested the item to be removed from the agenda.)

Items Added:

- **Old Business Item A.** - Discussion regarding updated information on Forensic Audit.
- **New Business Item G.** - Council to consider approval of appointment for an associate solicitor in the Municipal Court for the City of Jonesboro, Georgia.
- **New Business Item H.** - Council to consider approval of appointment for an associate judge in the Municipal Court for the City of Jonesboro, Georgia.
- **New Business Item I.** Discussion regarding Electronic Communication to Mayor and Council from Councilmember Fox as it relates to a specific email that was sent out today.
- **New Business Item J.** Discussion regarding elected official's use of the City's Logo.
- **New Business Item K.** Discussion regarding elected official's use of the City's letterhead for official communication.

Items C. through G. were renumbered to items B. - F.

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

IV. MAYOR'S PRESENTATIONS

None

V. PRESENTATIONS

None

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

- Linda Wenz (Jonesboro Resident) – Advised Mayor and Council of a business transaction with Toby's Tree Service as it related to a large tree in her yard.

- Kendra Emeruem (Jonesboro, GA) – Founder of "She is the Village" - Spoke in favor of the Education Trust (JET) Pilot Program Initiative.

At 6:18 p.m., Mayor Sartor left the meeting due to an emergency and returned at 6:33 p.m.

A motion was made for Councilmember Messick to assume Mayor Sartor's duties as presiding officer until she returns. Also, for the forensic audit update item to be discussed upon Mayor's return to the meeting.

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

- Ronnie Wells (Jonesboro Resident) – Spoke in favor of the JET Program.
- Wendy Taylor (Atlanta, GA) – Spoke in favor of the JET Program and a STEM experience.

VII. OLD BUSINESS (This item was discussed following New Business)

A. Discussion regarding updated information on the forensic audit.

City Attorney Wiley provided an update on the status of the forensic audit, summarizing her recent conversation with the accountant (Michelle McHale-Adams) from Plante Moran.

1. Inquired about the status of the investigation (when was it going to be completed).
2. Itemization of a $45,000.00 invoice from phase two and three.

City Attorney Wiley stated that Michelle told her they don't do itemized billings. Therefore, this was very concerning as it relates to the lack of an itemized invoice for the $45,000 billing. At this time, she spoke about an email dated February 19, 2026 that was sent from Michelle to City Attorney Wiley and copied to Mayor and Council. The email was received following a news article about the February 9th Council Meeting. Michelle later apologized for reacting based on media coverage rather than reviewing the meeting record or contacting the City Attorney.

City Attorney Wiley said clarification was needed in regard to the scope of the forensic audit, especially since there were three (3) new Councilmembers. Plante Moran sent an email outlining the original scope of the forensic analysis/investigation due to three (3) initial areas of concern by the City Council.

1. Period Covering FY 23-24 (Credit Card Purchase, Accounts Payable, Disbursements, and Employee Benefits)

City Attorney Wiley shared that the memo stated after Plante Moran was selected, the scope was revised and expanded beyond the initial RFP. It increased from seven (7) tasks to fourteen (14) tasks, and the grant compliance analysis was added.

Phase 1 – Plante Moran met with individual Councilmembers to get their concerns about what they felt were issues and then Plante Moran determined the scope of work based on those individuals' discussions.

City Attorney Wiley stated Plante Moran indicated this was purposefully done to keep it from being public. She expressed concern that the scope was developed through individual discussions with Councilmembers rather than in a public forum and emphasized that the forensic audit is a public record, not protected by attorney-client privilege.

The City paid $15,520.00 for Plante Moran to interview the Mayor, Mayor Pro-Tem and Councilmembers to learn of concerns. City Attorney Wiley stated, "I want the public to understand that Councilmembers only have authority as a group." "Councilmember do not have any individual authority." "The Mayor has some individual authority as the CEO, but even then that authority is limited in terms of what she can commit the City to do." Therefore, any individual concerns gathered from individual members should have come back into the public forum and those individual concerns should have been voted on at the will of this body. These are our concerns. There should not have been any secrecy of information.

At this time City Attorney Wiley stated there was no itemization given that shows how Plante Moran arrived at $45,000.00. The original contract outlined a scope of work involving their staff at various billing rates of $595.00 per hour to $175.00 per hour. This included language stating a blended hourly rate of $300.00 per hour. This language gave the impression that the City would be billed at a rate of $300.00 per hour. The accountant later stated that this language was an error and acknowledged that it created a misleading impression. As it turns out, the City was billed at higher hourly rates ranging from $450.00 to $550.00, as no lower-tier staff were utilized. As a result, approximately 92.75 hours was billed, totaling around $45,000.00.

The accountant ceased/stalled doing the work in regard to the City's request for an itemized invoice for $45,000.00. On the other hand, Michelle advised that she had all documents necessary to complete the work and presented two options moving forward: Complete the engagement under the current contract or prepare a new contract to revise the scope of work and/or remove the former City Attorney name. Michelle thought the agreement was between Plante Moran and City Attorney Dreyer and assumed the agreement was protected by attorney-client privilege. City Attorney Wiley stated, "you cannot use attorney-client privilege

in that manner to shield something that is not attorney-client privilege. Michelle told City Attorney Wiley that is the reason she had recommended the above-mentioned options.

Mayor Sartor stated on 11/15/2025 Plante Moran said they had everything they needed. City Attorney Wiley said Plante Moran advised the report could be completed by February 26, 2026, but Michelle saw the news article on February 16, 2026 and had some feelings about it and paused her work. Mayor Sartor shared her concerns about the $300.00 blended rate vs. the higher rate the City was charged. Nothing was done below the $450.00 rate.

- 35.50 hours at $550.00 and 57.25 hours at $450.00 = $45,287.50. This does not blend.

At this time, Mayor Sartor spoke regarding the level of secrecy (things that were done privately) that caused the City to be charged $550.00 per hour as it relates to $15,000.00 worth of interviews by Councilmembers. She stated that she asked Councilmembers (publicly) over and over what were the allegations. Councilmember Curney asked City Attorney Wiley how Plante Moran got the information to expand the scope. City Attorney Wiley stated from talking to Council privately.

Attorney Wiley advised that Plante Moran was waiting on confirmation if they would get paid for the $45,000.00 outstanding invoice and that the only thing left to do was grants.

Mayor Sartor said she asked Michelle (in November 2025) if she would come to the Council Meeting. Mayor said on February 9, 2026, she mentioned the invoice and copies were distributed on February 9, 2026 to Council. Councilmember Messick said she reached out to Michelle as it related to her attending the Council Meeting. However, Michelle said she would defer to the Mayor and City Attorney.

Mayor Sartor said the City needs a list of the grants that Plante Moran would be working on. She was only aware of ARPA yearly funding, CDBG Compliance, and LMIG.

Councilmember Messick said she would like Plante Moran to finish the audit and put a cap in place. Also, to leave the Grant Compliance Analysis where it is, the City would pay the $45,000.00, and for Michelle to come to the Council Meeting to report on her findings.

Mayor Sartor said she does not think Michelle had the City's credit card statement for FY 22 because she just got them from Truist Bank. She asked City Attorney Wiley to ask Michelle if she had FY 22 credit card statements.

Mayor Sartor asked Council if they would entertain a motion to complete the audit without the Grant Compliance Review, seek clarification for FY 22 credit card statement, the City to pay the $45,000.00 invoice, and for Plante Moran to complete what's remaining at a blended rate of $300.00 per hour.

A motion was made for Plante Moran to complete the forensic audit without the Grant Compliance Review and to seek clarification if Plante Moran has completed a credit card synopsis for FY 22. If not, then the documents would be provided in order for Michelle (Plante Moran) to complete them at a blended rate.

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

A motion was made to pay the $45,000.00 invoice dated December 30, 2025 to Plante Moran.

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

A motion was made regarding further engagement would be made based upon Michelle (of Plante Moran) agreement to attend a Council Meeting (public forum) to present her findings.

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

Point of Personal Privilege by Mayor Sartor – "We have gotten the final piece of information that we needed for our regular audit. Karen submitted that to Tab and Tab and sent an email out and hopefully by next week we will have a completed report for you on that. We did not get the letter from the attorney until Friday and so we got that into them."

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Council to discuss Conditional Use Permit Application **#26-CUP-001**, submitted by Tapestry School, Inc. The request is to operate a public charter school serving students in grades 6–10. The property is located at 142 College Street, Jonesboro, GA 30236, parcel 13241C C014.

Director Akuta led the discussion regarding the above-mentioned request to operate a Charter School for Grades 6-10. The proposed school meets 5 of the 6 conditional use requirements. Staff recommended approval of the request to operate a public charter school with the following Condition:

1. A traffic management and drop-off/pick-up plan shall be submitted to and approved by City staff prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

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

Councilmember A. Dixon led the discussion. Councilmember Curney inquired about making amendments to the document regarding the program. Councilmember A. Dixon stated that the program was initially introduced back in 2023. However, the City prioritized JYCG instead. Tonight, he reintroduced the JET program.

The Jonesboro Education Trust is a civic engagement driven youth investment initiative designed to introduce financial literacy, saving habits, and community participation beginning at the kindergarten level. The program connects positive civic engagement activities such as volunteering, family, financial literacy participation, and community involvement to education saving incentives funded through public and private partnerships. He stated he would like the proposed pilot program to start during the school year in August 2026. Mayor and Council asked questions and received clarification regarding the program.

At 6:33 p.m. Mayor Sartor returned to the meeting.

At 6:41 p.m. Councilmember C. Dixon left the meeting and returned at 6:44 p.m.

City Attorney Wiley recommended presenting the proposed document to Clayton County Public School Foundation and engaging in discussions to negotiate a final document. She recommended producing a Memorandum of Understanding Between Clayton County Foundation and the City of Jonesboro.

C. Council to discuss a proposed Intergovernmental Agreement Between the City of Jonesboro and the Downtown Development Authority, including review by legal counsel.

Councilmember Fox led the discussion. Mayor Sartor outlined key areas for determining responsibilities such as utilities, grass cutting, clerical functions, and IT service support, etc. City Attorney Wiley explained that an appropriate operating model (highly dependent on the City, Independent DDA, hybrid model, other various levels, etc.) would need to be identified

before drafting an MOU. Councilmember Curney asked whether relevant parties had vetted the proposal. Mayor Sartor noted the item could return to Council in May 2026.

D. Council to consider a Proposal regarding the Establishment of the City of Jonesboro Newsletter Committee.

Councilmember Fox led the discussion. She stated the purpose of the proposal is to formally establish a City of Jonesboro Newsletter Committee to support transparent, consistent, and inclusive communication between the City and its residents, businesses and stakeholders. The committee would assist with planning, coordination, and review of the City's newsletter to ensure content is accurate, accessible, representative, and fiscally responsible. Establishing a committee would help reduce the workload on City staff, increase community engagement, and ensure the newsletter funds are used efficiently and intentionally.

City Attorney Wiley said committees have to follow the Open Meetings Act. When the governing authority formally creates a committee whether it's one member, two members, whomever, then that created committee has to comply with the Open Meetings Act and all the meetings have to be published and open to the public. It doesn't have to be on television, however, there would be requirements on how you meet, public notices, same procedures that are done for Council Meetings. The doors have to be open, any member of the public can attend, etc.

Mayor clarified that she wanted a quality newsletter for 2026. She further discussed direct mail, budget, and administrative responsibilities vs. committee responsibilities.

A motion was made to postpone the item indefinitely.

RESULT: **Motion Failed for lack of a second**
MOVER: **Councilmember Curney**
SECONDER: **No one seconded the motion**

Councilmember C. Cameron left the meeting at 7:45 p.m. and returned at 7:48 p.m.

Mayor Sartor said she was okay with having a Committee along with hiring a communication person to assist.

Councilmember Curney said no other cities have a Newsletter Committee and she felt it was not necessary. However, she believed there were some governance issues regarding the separation of roles between Mayor and Council as policy makers vs. the staff as the administrative role. Additionally, she noted that there was language in the document she would like to revise and expressed support for hiring a communications professional.

At this time, City Attorney Wiley spoke about Powers and Duties of the Mayor in Article III of the Charter, Section 2.27(#3) - exercise supervision over all executive and administrative work of the city and provide for the coordination of administrative activities; (#6) recommend to the city council such measures relative to the affairs of the city, improvement of the government, and promotion of the welfare of its inhabitants as he/she may deem expedient;

Mayor Sartor discussed postage costs of approximately $700.00 per mailing, or $2,800 annually for quarterly newsletters, noting that remaining funds could be used to contract services to assist with the newsletter. Councilmember Fox could meet with that person. Councilmember Fox recommended a monthly newsletter instead of a quarterly newsletter. Mayor Sartor was in opposition of a monthly newsletter due to it being a continuous turnaround. At this time, the conversation ended.

E. Council to consider an Ordinance Establishing Quarterly Reporting from City Boards, Authorities, and Committees to the Mayor and Council.

Councilmember Fox recommended establishing a formal process for quarterly reports from City boards, authorities, and committees to the Mayor and Council to enhance transparency, accountability, and collaboration, noting this would help keep the Mayor and Council informed when they are unable to attend these types of meetings.

City Attorney spoke about the City's Charter, Chapter 33 – Board, Commissions, and Authorities. They are created by ordinance. She recommended creating an ordinance that applies to all of those boards, commissions, and authorities as it relates to reporting requirements rather than a resolution. Mayor Sartor asked that each board be "spelled out" (Main Street Advisor Board, Jonesboro Youth City Government, Beautification Committee, etc.). Also, she wants the report to be submitted in writing for her review.

Councilmember Fox stated that the report would include any announcements from boards, committees, or authorities. Mayor Sartor noted that boards, committees, and authorities are welcome to present announcements directly to the Mayor and Council at any time and that an ordinance is not required for such announcements.

Councilmember Curney said she doesn't feel disconnected from those meetings and is afraid it would become more redundant if they are made to do quarterly reporting. Also, it may slow down the Regular Council Meetings, which are quite length at times, and don't want to politicize our volunteer boards. Lastly, she stated she does support the intent of the resolution, but the resolution would need to be as formal as possible.

Mayor Sartor shared that all of the minutes for each board, committees, and authority would be available and nothing would probably be presented beyond minutes. She felt that the last three agenda items have been politically pushed and motivated for control. Anytime someone wants to hear from a committee, the committee is welcome to come. Lastly, Mayor Sartor stated this should be optional unless Council want a discussion or have specific questions.

Councilmember A. Dixon shared that an engaged/informed community are the strongest communities. He said he appreciate the resolution, but it would be great to hear from the residents. Councilmember Messick said she viewed the matter in a positive light and that the committees may have good things to share. Mayor Sartor stated, "committees can share whenever they would like to."

A motion was made to approve the creation of an ordinance by City Attorney Wiley, to bring back before Mayor and Council next week for quarterly reporting from City committees, boards, and the authority chair. It was discussed that a vote was not needed at this time. However, everyone agreed to bring the item back before Mayor and Council next week (March 9, 2026) to be voted upon.

RESULT: OLD BUSINESS

F. Council to consider a Memorandum of Understanding Between Clayton County, Georgia and the City of Jonesboro, Georgia regarding the construction of a Winter Weather Building (Salt Barn).

RESULT: 03/09/26 CONSENT AGENDA

G. Council to consider approval of the appointment of LeRoya Chester Jennings as the associate solicitor for Jonesboro's Municipal Court in the City of Jonesboro, Georgia.

RESULT: Approved (Vote was unanimous)

MOVER: **Councilmember Curney**
SECONDER: **Councilmember A. Dixon**

H. Council to consider approval of the appointment of Judge Nailah Grant McFarlane as the associate judge for Jonesboro's Municipal Court in the City of Jonesboro, Georgia.

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

I. Discussion regarding Electronic Communication between Mayor and Council Councilmember Fox as it relates to a specific email that was sent out on 03/02/2026.

Councilmember Fox led the discussion. She stated that she received an email earlier today from Mayor Sartor indicating the Mayor would no longer receive emails from her and that the emails would be deleted. Councilmember Fox noted that, in the absence of a City Manager, she was seeking clarification on the proper protocol for communication. Mayor Sartor explained that she was advised by City Attorney Wiley that the emails could not be deleted; therefore, an IT remedy was implemented to manage emails from Councilmember Fox when they are perceived as harassing or nitpicking. Mayor Sartor stated, "for the record, I will not delete emails, I will only delete spam from Councilmember Fox. The spam emails will go to a designated folder for my review."

Councilmember Fox stated, for the record, that she was not sending harassing emails and indicated she would be willing to read her emails aloud for public review to determine whether they were harassing in nature. Mayor Sartor replied that it is not up to the public to determine whether emails are harassing and asked whether Councilmember Fox was seeking a remedy for Council to consider. Councilmember Fox stated that her concern was when she requested information from the Mayor, the response she received was that the Mayor was busy. Mayor Sartor then clarified the specific request being referenced and stated that Councilmember Fox was seeking an immediate response, as if the Mayor works for her. Mayor Sartor noted that this was a single incident and contrasted it with numerous other occasions in which she had responded promptly and followed up by phone to seek clarification.

J. Discussion regarding elected official's use of the City's Logo.

Councilmember Fox led the discussion. Mayor Sartor stated that she was not aware of any specific provision governing the use of the City's logo; however, she agreed that elected officials are permitted to use the City's logo and trust that it would be used appropriately. She further noted that, in the past, anything placed on official letterhead was required to be submitted to the City Manager for approval. Councilmember Fox said she wanted this to be placed on the record that she is allowed to use the City's Logo.

K. Discussion regarding elected officials' permission to use the City's Official Letterhead.

Mayor Sartor stated that she would like Council to use a consistent, standard letterhead and emphasized the importance of proper use. She noted that there was and will be an official seal and official logo letterhead. City Attorney Wiley recommended the creation of an official letterhead that includes the Mayor and Council's information, which would be made available for elected officials to use. She further advised that the letterhead may not be used for campaigning, fundraising, or other non-official purposes. Mayor Sartor directed City Clerk Jewett to prepare the official letterhead versions for distribution to the Mayor and Council. City Attorney Wiley also stated that she would issue a memorandum outlining the permitted and prohibited uses of the official letterhead, which is to be used solely in an official City Council capacity.

IX. 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

Point of Personal Privilege by Councilmember A. Dixon

- House Bill 942 – Limits the ad valorem tax exemption for public property owned by political subdivision outside their territorial limits, with specific development and usage conditions.
- Senate Bill 133 – Aims to amend the juvenile code in Georgia, creating a uniform process to assume custody of children resulting from disposition orders.
- Georgia House Bill 1099 – Blind Persons' Braille Literacy Rights and Education Act

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

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

Dr. Donya L. Sartor, Mayor

Shandrella Jewett, City Clerk