



Mayor and City Council Work Session

Tuesday, April 15, 2025 at 6:30 PM

City Hall, 875 Main Street, Stone Mountain, Georgia 30083

Minutes

**Mayor and Council: Dr. Beverly Jones – Mayor | Post 3 :Mayor Pro Tem Ryan Smith
Post 1: Council Member Anita Bass | Post 2: Council Member Mark Marianos
Post 4: Council Member Gil Freeman | Post 5: Council Member Shawnette Bryant
Post 6: Council Member Teresa Crowe**

**Staff: Shawn Edmondson - City Manager | Maggie Dimov - Assistant City Manager -
DDA/Economic Development Director | Shavala Ames - City Clerk | Jeff Strickland - City
Attorney**

Call to Order

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM

Determination of Quorum

PRESENT: Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant, Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

Invocation and Pledge

Mayor Jones led the pledge, followed by the invocation

Citizen Comments

Citizen Comment 1: Denise Phillips: Congratulated Council on the cadence of the Special Called Meeting; Council needs to be prepared to discuss items on the agenda; Don't put taxpayer's information on a public document.

Citizen Comment 2: Ginny Andino: Supports Main Street Melody's; City of Stone Mountain did a great job creating an event that features local talent and variety of musical styles; Great representation of the many demographics.

Citizen Comment 3: Rhonda Morrison: Mentioned audit findings she found online; Line item 2022.001 is out of balance; The \$2,100 difference has not been identified; Misuse of SPLOST funds; Deficiencies due to untrained staff; suggest City Manager meets with governing body monthly or quarterly to discuss financials.

Citizen Comment 4: Joan Monroe: Mentioned gun laws in the State of Georgia and felons; Spoke on the audit and city does not reconcile its property taxes - leads to public errors and fraud; Council operates lazy government; Lack of skill and budget to do audit correctly; Misappropriation of SPLOST funds; The Mayor and Freeman are the only ones who wanted to look into the financials.

Citizen Comment 5: Cheryl Dudley: Supports the removal of confederate symbols from the City's cemetery - the City of Stone Mountain is 70% minority; Do not need to glorify the confederacy;

44 Saturday is the annual Stone Mountain Memorial Ceremony – Walter Kennedy is the founding member
45 of League of the South which is a hate organization.

46
47 **Citizen Comment 6: B. Patterson:** Concerned about finances; Mentioned the audit report that came
48 out does not look good - SPLOST funds are not being used properly; The report looks like people are
49 stealing; Last finance report was in October 2024; Management did not do a good job at selecting
50 finance staff.

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52 **Citizen Comment 7: Sheila Ligon:** Mutts on Main event was amazing and hope it can become an
53 annual event – many left the event to adopt a pet; Many seniors were not able to attend but was excited
54 about the event.

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56 **Citizen Comment 8: Jelani Linder:** Mentioned Mutts on Main was a great; Need to make provisions
57 for other events on the lawn; Communication needs to get better on a whole

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59 **Citizen Comment 9: Ms. Thomas:** Thanked Mr. Whitaker for the past audit; 2024 needs to be looked
60 at because it is a mess; 4/2 keeps voting to spend money that we do not have; SPLOST I was 10 mill –
61 streets are a mess; Parks did not get what they expected; City is divided; Everyone should worry about
62 4/2 to increase millage rate.

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64 **Citizen Comment 10: Ginger Criswell:** Mentioned she was disgusted with who decided to overrule
65 Tunes by the Tracks with Main Street Melodies; Spoke regarding the previous City Manager obtaining
66 grant in Pine Lake; The Mayor is the most divisive.

67
68 **Citizen Comment 11: Clint Monroe:** Mentioned the Mayor and Council did not have anything to do
69 with the decision to monetize for the CSX parking lot and the anger of the city is well deserved about
70 how they handled it; The audit has gaps due to the conversion from Clear Gov.

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72 **Citizen Comment 12: Joy Lesure:** Asked about an update or resolution regarding the adjacent
73 building was requested; Council Member Freeman was the sole member to provide a response.

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75 **V. Reading of Communications**

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77 **VI. Adoption of The Agenda of The Day**

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79 **ACTION: MOTION TO ADOPT THE AGENDA OF THE DAY AS WITH THE FOLLOWING**
80 **CHANGES: MOVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS ITEM #3 – 2023 AUDIT UPDATE, TO THE TOP**
81 **OF THE AGENDA; MOVE NEW BUSINESS ITEM #5 – POND PROJECTS UPDATE, TO THE**
82 **TOP OF THE AGENDA; MOVE NEW ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS BEFORE**
83 **UNFINISHED BUSINESS; REMOVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS ITEM # 7 – 1 HOUR PARKING**
84 **DISCUSSION, FROM THE AGENDA; REMOVE NEW BUSINESS ITEM #1 – CHANGE**
85 **ORDER #6 WITH A&S PAVING, FROM THE AGENDA; ADD GMC BUILDING USAGE FOR**
86 **DEKALB ELECTIONS, TO THE AGENDA**

87 Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Seconded by Council Member: Post 2
88 Mark Marianos.

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90 **Voting Yea:** Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos,
91 Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe, Council Member:
92 Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

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94 **Voting Nay:** Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman

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96 **MOTION PASSED**

98 **VII. Committee Discussion Items**

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- 100 1. Stone Mountain Community Garden - Julian Pierre gave an overview of activities for Stone
 - 101 Mountain Community Garden.
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 - 103 2. Planning Commission – No update.
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 - 105 3. Historic Preservation Commission - No update.
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 - 107 4. Parks and Recreation Committee - Joan Monroe gave updates on Parks and Recreation, which
 - 108 included recommendations on a poetry slam, family fun day, book benches, Pan African Festival
 - 109 and movies in the park. Park's need maintenance. The Public Works Director should attend all
 - 110 meetings. City Manager meeting was requested.
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112 City Manager Edmondson confirmed that many items requested are not within budget. City

113 Attorney Strickland suggest drafting legislation to formerly establish the Parks and Recreation

114 Committee.

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116 **VIII. Staff Reports**

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- 118 1. Public Safety Report & Award Presentation
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120 Public Safety Report - Major S.E. Parks gave an overview of all police statistics and updates for the

121 month of May. Officer Wilson was presented with the top shooter award.

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123 **IX. City Manager's Report**

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125 City Manager, Shawn Edmondson gave an overview of the handout of the City Manager's report and

126 Administrative Stats for the month of March. March Employee of the Month - Bianca Smith, Chief Clerk

127 of Court.

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129 **X. Council Policy Discussion Topics**

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131 **XI. Updates**

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- 133 1. Discussion: 2023 Audit Update, requested by Council Member Gil Freeman
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135 Auditor James Whitaker gave an overview on the 2023 Audit conducted by his firm. SPLOST Audit

136 I and II were also included in this discussion.

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138 Mr. Whitaker opened the floor by asking if any Council Members had questions he could address.

139 Council Members inquired about the delay in completing the audit. Mr. Whitaker explained that the

140 delay was primarily due to turnover in personnel, as well as challenges related to the level of

141 experience on the accounting side. He also noted that a significant gap occurred when key

142 financial information was not provided to him until after the fiscal year had ended, which further

143 prolonged the process.

144

145 A question was raised regarding why Stone Mountain City Hall is listed under the name of the

146 Georgia Municipal Association. Mr. Whitaker explained that this arrangement stems from

147 the financing structure in place at the time of purchase, which required the lease to be managed

148 and paid off through GMA to support the City's cash flow. He noted that once the lease is fully

149 satisfied, ownership of the property will be transferred to the City.

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When asked about the most concerning findings in the audit, Mr. Whitaker stated that there may be instances where funds will need to be returned. However, he emphasized that no evidence of fraud was discovered during the audit. He noted that if any such issues were found, they would be thoroughly investigated, as they often indicate underlying errors.

Mr. Whitaker also addressed the use of SPLOST funds, explaining the restrictions and eligible uses of those funds. He stressed the importance of the City maintaining direct oversight of revenues and receivables, especially given recent organizational changes and a lack of transparency in certain areas.

Mr. Whitaker cautioned that the delayed audit could impact the City's eligibility for state grants and trigger requirements under federal single audit regulations. He provided additional details regarding the implications of these issues.

2. Discussion: POND Projects / City Council Update and Stakeholder Engagement, requested by Assistant City Manager & DDA Director

The consulting firm POND delivered a presentation and project update on key initiatives for future city development. Lilian Haddad provided a comprehensive timeline outlining the project's origins, key milestones, and the final stages of formulating recommendations and repayment plans. She also detailed the timeline and structure of the community open house and the steps taken to reach the current phase of the projects. Additionally, she shared data on website engagement and community participation.

Consultant Andrew Smith further emphasized the importance of public safety, particularly in response to Council Members' concerns about aging sidewalks. He acknowledged that many sidewalks do not meet current accessibility standards, including ADA compliance for wheelchair users and safe routes for children. He proposed conducting a citywide ADA assessment to identify priority areas and help establish a fixed budget for phased improvements. While not all issues can be resolved immediately, the primary objective is to enhance safety for the community, an aim that several Council Members strongly supported.

Funding options were also discussed. Mr. Smith explained the differences between securing local or state funding versus pursuing federal funds for large-scale infrastructure projects, outlining the pros and cons of each approach. Council Members posed additional questions to gain further clarity on the initiatives. A community survey has been conducted, and the official project kickoff is scheduled for next Tuesday at 10:00 AM.

ACTION: MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:03 P.M.

Motion made by Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Seconded by Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 4 Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Bryant

Voting Nay: Council Member: Post 1 Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3, Council Member: Post 6 Crowe

MOTION FAILED

ACTION: MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING TO DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING ITEMS: CSX SPECIAL USE PERMIT, GMC BUILDING USE FOR DEKALB ELECTIONS, HB 581 OPT IN, AND DESIGNATING THE CITY MANAGER AS A SIGNATORY

Motion made by Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Seconded by Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 1 Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3, Council Member: Post 6 Crowe

Voting Nay: Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

MOTION PASSED

XII. Unfinished Business

1. Consideration of an action on a request for a Special Use Permit to allow paid parking services with the CSX right-of-way on the western side of Main Street between the Train Depot and West Mountain Street, requested by City Planner

Meetings were held between Planning/Zoning and City Council to address and resolve issues related to the CSX parking services project. Assistant City Manager Maggie Dimov provided an overview of ongoing discussions with CSX and noted that Mr. Daniel with Preferred Parking had also been involved in these conversations. City Planner Elizabeth Mitchum was present to clarify the reasons behind the project's postponement. Council Members raised concerns on various aspects of the project.

ACTION: MOTION TO SEND BACK TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION BEFORE MAYOR AND COUNCIL MAKES A DECISION

Motion made by Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Seconded by Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

Voting Nay: Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

MOTION FAILED

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE SPECIAL USE PERMIT, WITH CONDITIONS FOR CSX PARKING

Motion made by Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

Voting Nay: Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

MOTION PASSED

2. Consideration of an action on a request to approve the amended Facility Use Agreement between the City of Stone Mountain and Dekalb County for the utilization of the GMC Building for election services.

City Clerk Ames explained regulations that the City cannot charge the County for the use of the GMC Building per Georgia Code.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE ADDING GMC BUILDING FOR DEKALB ELECTION USE

Motion made by Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Seconded by Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

Voting Nay: Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

MOTION PASSED

3. Resolution 2025-11 to Rescind the opt out of the Homestead Exemption 581 and opt in HB 92

Mayor Pro Tem Smith provided an explanation of the significance of House Bill 92, highlighting its potential benefits for seniors and low-income residents. City Attorney Strickland further clarified that HB 92 permits cities that previously opted out of House Bill 581 can now opt in to the exemption offered under HB 92. He emphasized that the decision to opt in is time-sensitive and would require prompt action if the City chooses to pursue this option.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2025-11 AND OPT IN HB 92

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Seconded by Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

Voting Nay: Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

MOTION FAILED

4. Consideration of an action on a request to approve adding the City Manager as signatory on the signature card, requested by Council Member Mark Marianos

City Attorney Strickland confirmed that this action does not substitutes the Mayor's signing authority.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE ADDING THE CITY MANAGER AS SIGNATORY ON THE SIGNATURE CARD

Motion made by Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Seconded by Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe

Voting No: Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant

MOTION PASSED

- XVII. **Adjournment**

ACTION: MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING AT 11:04 P.M.

Motion made by Council Member: Post 4 Freeman, Seconded by Council Member: Post 2 Marianos

312 **Voting Yea:** Council Member: Post 1 Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem:
313 Post 3, Council Member: Post 4 Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Bryant, Council Member:
314 Post 6 Crowe

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316 **MOTION PASSED (UNANIMOUSLY)**

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Dr. Beverly Jones, Mayor

Shavala Ames, City Clerk