

# Mayor and Council Work Session / Retreat Minutes - Final MAYOR AND COUNCIL (First Session)



Derek Norton, Mayor  
Tim Gould, Mayor Pro Tem (Ward 6)  
Glenn Pickens (Ward 1)  
Latonia P. Hines (Ward 2)  
Travis Lindley (Ward 3)  
Charles "Corkey" Welch (Ward 4)  
Susan Wilkinson (Ward 5)  
Rickey N. Oglesby, Jr. (Ward 7)

Lanier Islands  
Legacy Lodge & Conference Center  
7000 Lanier Islands Parkway  
Buford, GA 30518

City Attorney Scott Cochran  
City Administrator Joseph Bennett  
City Clerk Heather K. Peacon-Corn

**April 24, 2025  
12:00 PM**

## 1. Roll Call

**Present:** 8 – Mayor Derek Norton, Councilmember Glenn Pickens, Councilmember Latonia P. Hines, Councilmember Travis Lindley, Councilmember Charles Welch, Councilmember Susan Wilkinson, Mayor Pro Tem / Councilmember Tim Gould, Councilmember Rickey N. Oglesby Jr.

**Also Present:** 1 – Scott Cochran

**Staff:** 5 – Joe Bennett, Jill Head, Heather Peacon-Corn, Kristin Robinson, Christy Ullman

## 2. Call to Order

Mayor Derek Norton called to order the April 24, 2025 Mayor and Council Work Session held at Lanier Islands Legacy Lodge & Conference Center (7000 Lanier Islands Parkway, Buford, GA 30518) at 12:12 PM.

## 3. Formal Business

### A. 12:00p – 2p Mayor & Council Work Session (with lunch)

Mayor Norton presented a list of projects and invited discussion from the council on the various topics:

#### **South Cobb Drive Improvements:**

- Longer Term Project
- \$26M of the \$35M already secured – end of 2029 for completion
- Congresswoman McBath newly representing Smyrna – visited and learned about this project
- Mayor Pro Tem Gould said Congresswoman McBath seems eager to engage with Smyrna
- Has asked Senator Ossoff for funding as well to fill in the gaps

- Grade separation between Windy Hill and S. Cobb Dr. – county and state project

#### **Tolleson Pool/Tennis:**

- Combination of 2022 SPLOST, need additional \$8M to fully fund with bond
- Focal point for Councilmember Lindley – complete by Memorial Day 2027
- Questions about Croy's timeline – approved timeline was six weeks ago
- Moving pipe that is six feet in the ground, and concrete crusher was in the shop
- This needs to be moved to an outside contractor and of city hands
- A Project Manager should be leading this – move everything under Croy
- Councilmember Welch said Croy was supposed to present final plans, but no final plans came forward
- Councilmember Lindley said Croy needs to provide regular updates
- Councilmember Lindley said timeline is concerning
- Councilmember Lindley mentioned communications are in a bad state; stated it takes nine clicks to find any information about this project on the website; city hired communications consultant that does little for the city; wants a better communications plan to highlight successes throughout the city
- Councilmember Hines wants a communications update; most people do not go to social media to research updates about the city; social media should complement the website, not replace it
- Consensus is that council is underwhelmed with communication/public relations; there is no communications plan

#### **Ward 7 Splash Pad:**

- Combination of 2022 SPLOST and General Fund
- Finished at the end of 2025
- There was a small change order
- Croy is managing the project / project administration

#### **First Baptist Church Development:**

- Church will rent from the city until their new church is completed
- Councilmember Welch asked about the process going forward after citizen input. Andrea Worthy will be providing an update tomorrow
- The property is 9 acres plus another ½ acre from neighboring property
- There is a requirement by the bonding agency that the city has to have a certain percentage of expenses in general fund = \$17.5M

#### **First Baptist Chapel Renovation:**

- \$500K in bond, sold the Atlanta Rd property (\$3.3M) – part of this bought the GA Power building, part of it is sitting in a bond disposition account
- December 2027 – the new church building may be substantially complete
- Timeline to spend the \$1.7M – by end of December 2026
- Mayor Pro Tem Gould asked about ADA compliance. It will need to be brought up to code

#### **Georgia Power Building:**

- \$1.5M for renovations to be completed by April 2026
- Awaiting a structural engineer's review

- Plan is to move Water/Utilities, Human Resources, IT, and maybe Community Relations
- Discussions have taken place to move Community Relations upstairs to the back two offices
- City Hall – Court Services takes over UB and HR current areas
- Court Services – Council wing, meeting spaces, office spaces
- Councilmember Welch would like to see an RFP for a Phase I facilities plan and a Phase II Interior Layout Plan

#### **Downtown Surface Lot:**

- Funded from parking deck
- Should be completed by July
- Permits and bonding still need to be secured
- Surface lot is tying into larger lot
- Councilmember Oglesby expressed concern that the parking lot will not be completed by the time some events are taking place (Juneteenth) - construction should not impact current parking

#### **Castelaw Site Purchase:**

- Zoned for high density, LOI, general fund may fund its purchase rather than bonding
- Walton has a master plan for that site, three weeks to a month for appraisal
- They wanted to have senior living in the back with city use in front
- Comfortable with \$1.5M

#### **IGO Land Purchase:**

- Funded from parking deck line item
- LOI with Worthing, placeholder for future city facility

#### **Downtown Bathroom/Playground:**

- Met with contractor, Couch Group
- Started this August 8, 2024 – soil issues
- SPLOST project – late July for playground
- Staff said there were issues with the pavers on King Street
- Headed toward closing King Street permanently from Bank to Powder Springs
- At the point when staff knew this was not going to be done on time, let council know – communication issue
- Suggestion that regular updates occur – mayor and council meet every two weeks at Committee of the Whole or Pre-Council
- Councilmember Lindley brought up signage similar to “SPLOST Dollars at Work” signs

#### **Street Resurfacing:**

- Approximately 192 total miles of road in Smyrna
- 6.8 miles per year should be resurfaced
- Public Works is putting together a condition list / assessment
- Look at parking lots on the front end of that \$10M
- \$225K/mile for resurfacing

#### **Bridge over Cobb Parkway and IGO Site - Later discussions to take place**

Mayor Norton asked council members to think about their wish list items for 2028 SPLOST. Scott Cochran, City Attorney, spoke about the billboard case. The agreed concept is that they will lease a space from the city near the Battery, then they share the revenue which will go toward the arts program. It will be approximately \$20-30K/year.

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Gould

- Traffic Calming Committee – would like to include sidewalks as part of the discussion

Councilmember Latonia P Hines

- Rose Garden: pavilion has ADA issues – cannot reach the playground safely
- Working on the historic preservation of the three churches
- Village Parkway – traffic calming committee measures implemented? When?
- Historic flooding and preferred contractors – communicating that information out to residents and business owners

Councilmember Charles Welch

- SPLOST collections may be over the anticipated budget
- Wants a workup of a financial timeline of when those funds come in so as to potentially avoid bond issues
- Does not feel that bond issues three years in a row does not reflect positively upon the city
- Community Center – entering the back entrance reveals worn and dirty bricks – he would like pressure washing to be done
- Trash cans

Councilmember Rickey N. Oglesby, Jr.

- There are so many projects, but it seems that there are so many issues that delay projects significantly
- Would like to consider using project managers other than Croy because they may have too many – Kristin Robinson explained that they do have a list of other groups that could offer management outside of Croy
- Councilmember Welch mentioned that institutional knowledge is very important
- Met with Mayor of Mableton – it is clear there are issues with Smyrna and Mableton boundaries
- Would like to see signage, banners, flags, etc. to signify being in Smyrna (vs Mableton), especially in Ward 7 because they have pride being a Smyrna resident
- Juneteenth Festival – spoke about sponsorship opportunities, a committee of citizens in the area, and Jodi Mills' great contribution to coordinating things
- Many people and businesses have approached him expressing they want to be a part of the Juneteenth event – please direct those inquiries to Jodi Mills
- Discussion took place on how sponsorship funds come into the city, how they are allocated, etc. – specific events sponsorships are for the event only while overarching sponsorships can be moved into the events fund
- He highlighted the vendors and activities: kid zone with an education component, Mac's – Bourbon tasting, Alton Walker – MC and comedian, female DJ, outdoor dance floor, festival foods, art mural with public participants
- Mentioned needing more public safety presence in Ward 7
- The Beltline is officially connected to the Silver Comet Trail – wants to be proactive rather than reactive

- There is a perception that the turf fields are not to be used by Smyrna residents and that only the soccer groups have access to those fields – the only groups that can reserve those fields seem to only be the soccer groups
- Further discussion needs to happen regarding the turf fields

Councilmember Susan Wilkinson

- Spoke about the flooding issues throughout the city – Smyrna is not a member of the community rating system. Flood insurance would be cheaper if Smyrna became a member
- Has continued to receive phone calls about the yard waste cans
- Councilmember Lindley and she met with Croy and staff about the remnants on Windy Hill. They are small but not deep. Scott Cochran stated that there are limitations for governmental use vs. non-governmental use. Mayor Norton wants a map of the remnants
- There is an issue with the tax assessor on how the properties were acquired. The DDA would need to be involved
- S. Cobb Dr. – pocket park in that corridor

Councilmember Glenn Pickens

- Mayor and Council have been invited to tour the Truett Cathy facility

Councilmember Travis Lindley

- The public open house for the downtown redevelopment from 5:30-7:30
- Upgrade some streets around the site – Church St. may look very different
- A resident spoke to him about an idea for formalizing a neighborhood name behind City Hall
- There have been HOA meetings – huge thanks to staff for getting information out to neighbors concerning the pool

Mayor Derek Norton

- Spoke about closing downtown streets only on the weekends for safety reasons. There are some businesses that do not want to do that, but he would like to continue to reach out and see if it is something that can be done
- Boundaries with staff – Mayor and Council are calling or texting the City Administrator Joe Bennett well after hours
- Mr. Bennett stated that sometimes he may not be able to get back with them right away, but he will get back to them – emergencies are obviously reasons to call him
- Mayor Norton asked that council please be considerate of staff's time

## 6. Other Business

## 7. Adjournment

Mayor Derek Norton adjourned the April 24, 2025 Mayor and Council Work Session at 2:15 PM.

Facilities are provided throughout City Hall for the convenience of persons with disabilities.

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THIS MEETING WAS PROPERLY NOTICED AND POSTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NOTICING STANDARDS AS OUTLINED IN O.C.G.A. 50-14-3:  
The City of Smyrna website – [www.smyrnaga.gov](http://www.smyrnaga.gov)  
City Hall, 2800 King Street SE, Notice Boards