



City Council Meeting Minutes
September 23, 2024
7:00 pm

I. Roll Call by City Clerk, Brenda James found the following members present:

The Honorable Mayor Pro-Tem James Whitmore
The Honorable Samantha Hudson
The Honorable Ulysses J. Smallwood

The Honorable Alex Heath
The Honorable Hattie Portis-Jones

Absent: The Honorable Linda J. Davis

II. The meeting was called to order by the Honorable Mayor Avery.

Also present was City Administrator Tony Phillips, Assistant City Attorney Serena Nowell, and City Clerk Brenda James.

III. The invocation was provided by Pastor Greta Fowler of St. John AME Church.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance was in Unison.

V. Presentations and Proclamations:

1. GRPA Track & Field State Champions/GRPA 8U Baseball State Runner Up

Parks & Recreation Director Chapin Scott presented the 2024 GRPA District 4 Champions and GRPA Class B State Runner ups for our Braves Baseball team and GRPA Class B/C Track & Field State Champions:

Coaches:

Head Coach Moya Sinkfield, Van Johnson Jr., Marty Brown, Marshaunda Blanks

Players:

Myles Brown	Sergio Butler	Langston Darden
Timothy Gilmore Jr.	Van Johnson	King Langford
Devin Leaks	Keiter Ligon	Ivan Martinez
Jace Sinkfield	Maliya Sinkfield	Sosa Sinkfield
Destin Wimbish		

GRPS Class B/C Track & Field State Champions

Eli Hall – 1600 M, 800M	Justin Duncan – 100M, 200M
Ashton Strong – 400M,	Brooklyn Ware – 800M

9/10 Boys – 4x4 Eli Hall, Ashton Strong, James Flowers, Lennox Owensby (State Record)
11/12 Boys – 4x4 Christian Mainor, Aaron Strong, Mason Warren, Anthony Tucker (State Record)
13/14 Boys – 4x4 Myron Brown, Kevin Pope, Landon Nelson, Tiras Thomas
7/8 Girls – 4x4 Elle Hall, Maliya Sinkfield, Audrianna Strong, Autumn Daniels
Mason Warren 400M (State Record)
Maliya Sinkfield 100M (State Record), 200M

2. Youth City Council Presentation

Parks & Recreation Director Chapin Scott presented this item and said they have placed the first Fairburn Youth Council. They have various projects to complete, and they finished their six-week public speaking workshop. They've completed the leadership and community service projects, and they will share the speeches they prepared on the one change they believe would significantly improve the quality of life in Fairburn. Ms. Scott gave kudos to Ms. Anastasia Johnson for leading this initiative and for holding the workshop for them, she is a Fairburn resident and wanted to feed into our youth. The following Youth Council presented their speeches:

Sanaa Scipio
Madison Woods
Lucas Mitchell
Yves Dognon
Mckenzie Floyd

3. Certified City Clerk

City Clerk Brenda James presented this item and said she has the pleasure of presenting from the University of Georgia Carl Vincent Institute of Government, a plaque that hereby certifies that Deannia Ray has successfully completed 101 hours of coursework and instruction to fulfill the educational requirements of the Georgia Clerk's Educational Institute to be recognized as a Georgia Certified Clerk.

VI. Adoption of the City Council Agenda

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Council Member Heath provided the second. **The motion carried unanimously.**

VII. Public Comments:

Honie Williams said she has been here for 18 years and faithful member of this community. On September 9th, she was present at the city council meeting and what she witnessed was horrifying. She said Mr. Whitmore, you and I and D'Avante use to have big fun at city hall before you became a city council person. She said you were aggressive, rude, and disrespectful. You insulted the integrity of the city administrator, the attorney, the fellow council people. Council Member Hudson, you got an A that night and

attempted to calm him down, it didn't work. Mr. Russell Hargrave gave his time to Ms. Williams. She said Exodus 20 and 12 says honor thy father and thy mother, that our days may be long and that's as far as most of us get. But what it's really saying, is respecting authority, speaking polite, being courteous even when you find it difficult to get along with authority. You were aggressive when the mayor asked that you be removed, you threatened the two police officers and dared them to put their hands on you. She was blown away and could not believe it and then you asked the Chief of Police to never let that happen again. She said my dear friend, you were wrong, and she doesn't understand and hopes at some point he can let her know what really happened.

Inga Kennedy thanked Mayor and Council for bringing the blighted property ordinance to the forefront of the city. This is very important and near and dear to her community and thanked them for all they've done in the Lightning Community. This ordinance will give it more strength and pointed out Section 53-122, where the levy of increase on blighted real property are identified, the dwelling house is to be occupied as the primary residents. She hopes that we stick to that because we have lots of investors coming into the community trying to acquire our property. She read how the city would be notified, at least five residents of the city can suggest properties of concern and asked council to review and said people are afraid to speak up. She also said that the timetable needs to be reviewed.

Ellen Stegall thanked Mayor and Council for putting up the stop signs on Oak and Bay Street and requested police presence because people are running those stop signs. She said they need at least two more stop signs because children are out playing, and people do not slow down.

Shauntell B said she is a resident and has been here all her life. She wanted to see if there would be any voter registration activations throughout this year's Fall Festival. The last day for Georgians to register to vote is October 7th and early voting begins on October 15th. There is a nonpartisan nonprofit called When We all Vote that has a regional coordinator for the State of Georgia to potentially partner with to ensure residents have all the resources needed for this year's election.

Maya Osun wanted information on the proposed traffic signal for John Rivers and 29. She received City Administrator Phillips correspondence to the Durham Lakes Community but requested some clarity on getting the stop signal and who is paying for it. What they are afraid of is the developer made it clear they were not paying for it and if that stance has changed, they need to know. The first public comment seemed very calculated and if we are going to get on any of the council people, she thinks it is unfair to single just one out, everyone needs to be held accountable. There have been times everyone sitting before us that we voted for has shamed us, so let's be fair and let's hold everybody accountable. She doesn't know the purpose of whose agenda running for mayor and why that matters at this point. What matters is coming together and stop attacking one another and these calculating moves, we're over it. Councilman Whitmore has always been there for her and her fellow neighbors, she doesn't always agree with everything but overall, he has served this community well.

VIII. Approval of the Minutes:

4. Approval of the minutes Regular Council Meeting Minutes of September 9, 2024

Council Member Heath made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Council Member Smallwood provided the second. **The motion carried unanimously.**

IX. Public Hearings: None

X. Consent Agenda: N/A

XI. Regular Agenda Items:

5. Blighted Property Ordinance

Planning & Zoning Director Denise Brooks presented this item and said the purpose of this ordinance is to work on neighborhood revitalization and stabilization. Mayor and Council requested we look into additional options to address blight. One of the things that she is proud of is them partnering with the faith-based community to go out and help senior citizens, and veterans to do repairs. They are addressing a lot of things, but the item before you is the blight tax. They hope this will provide an incentive for the property owners for redevelopment and to help provide relief for the number of times our Code Enforcement Officers or Police Officers are having to deal with these blighted properties.

Council Member Hudson made a motion to approve the Ordinance to amend Chapter 53(Taxation) of the Code of Ordinances of Fairburn, Georgia, to add a new article to be numbered Article V and entitled "Community Redevelopment Tax Incentive Program"; to provide standards, procedures, and other provisions for identification of blighted property; to provide for a levy of increase on ad valorem taxes for blighted property; to provide for remediation; and to provide for a decrease on ad valorem taxes on property after successful remediation. The second was provided by Council Member Heath.

Council Member Portis-Jones made a substitute motion to postpone the blighted property ordinance to review and incorporate concerns. The second was provided by Mayor Pro Tem Whitmore.

Council Member Hudson said Ms. Kennedy mentioned something about community members feeling intimidated to talk. We need to collaborate with police, use signage to send a message to that community, and create a slogan for our blighted properties. We need to have Police meet with communities to give them tools and resources, so they won't feel threatened or intimidated. She agrees that we should wait until her voice is heard in this ordinance. **The substitute motion carried unanimously.**

6. Approval of a Task Order with ISE for Engineering Services on the Fayetteville Road Streetscapes Project

Community Development Director Lester Thompson presented this item and said the Fayetteville Road Water Main Improvements Project was completed on October 19th, 2021. ISE provided the design and construction management services for the project. The original project was called the Fayetteville Road Waterline Relocation & Sidewalk Project, and the scope included pedestrian improvements on Fayetteville Road, from Bay Street to Edelweiss Drive. However, to reduce project costs and to address the more immediate concerns, the pedestrian improvements were removed from the project scope. Now, we are attempting to revisit that and extend the project scope from East Broad Street to Trotter's Farm using the same survey but expanding that survey.

Mayor Pro Tem Whitmore made a motion to approve the Task Order with Integrated Science & Engineering, Inc. (ISE) for Engineering Services on the Fayetteville Road Streetscapes Project in the amount of \$70,210. The second was provided by Council Member Heath. **The motion carried unanimously.**

XII. Reports:

7. City Administrator's Monthly Report

City Administrator Tony Phillips presented this item and gave a brief summary of some of the highlights for August 2024, in the report.

- Safety Training Center Master Plan is in progress
- Emergency generator for City Administration Building is in progress
- Completed Final Report for the 2024 Economic Development Strategic Plan including needs assessment and market studies in conjunction with consultant teams KB Advisory Group and Urban Pulse
- Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Grand Opening for Enterprise Truck Rental, celebrating expansion and two years of excellence in customer service
- Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Grand Opening for Peach Cobbler Factory
- Train Depot Project: Initiated solicitation for proposals for lease agreement and tenancy. Next steps will include evaluation and recommendation for tenant
- The City of Fairburn in partnership with Dashboard has finalized the activities and artist for the Hispanic Heritage month Alleyway event, Mr. Jose Ibarra Rizo completed the photos and conducted interviews with community members
- The Housing Market Study and Grocery Store Matrix has been completed

Mr. Phillips discussed the traffic light on Hwy 29 and John Rivers and said he sent some correspondence to the Durham Lakes Community last week and spoke with the President of the Property Owners Association to provide an update. The plans for the

Meribel Townhomes project at the corner of John's River and Hwy 29 that was approved by Council earlier this year, is where this light will go. There has been a traffic form submitted to GDOT, currently the approval of the full site development plan which is required before they move forward and ultimately the issues of the full land disturbance permit is contingent upon the receipt of the approved GDOT signal design plans and the associated permit. They will not get an LDP until we get an approved design from GDOT for the light that goes in at that intersection. They don't have the light approved by GDOT and the Developer is paying for the light. Council Member Portis-Jones asked that communication be provided to council and to keep them in the loop.

Mr. Phillips introduced new Finance Director, Tameka Billingsley. Ms. Billingsley has over 30 years of experience in Accounting and Finance and recently served as Executive Director of Business Services with Fulton County Schools and we're excited to welcome her here.

Council Member Hudson highlighted the young lady's public comment by making sure we utilize the opportunity to either network about voter registration at the Fall Festival or Fulton County is here. She requested an update on the Water Authority, we understand that infrastructure is important, water quality improves the quality of life, and she hasn't heard much about how our budget is going to improve Fairburn's infrastructure for FY2025. She wants to know the plans for Campbellton Road tree trimming, this is a major passageway in our city, and she saw some trees hanging over the lines. On Lake Joyce Lane and Lake Esther, there are two vacant corner lots that are overgrown with weeds, and she received some calls to get that taken care of.

Council Member Portis Jones asked that the gateway on Hwy 74 be looked at, it is overgrown, and the City of Fairburn sign is becoming hidden from overgrown brush.

XIII. Council Comments:

Council Member Heath had no comments.

Council Member Portis-Jones congratulated the Baseball and Track and Field team. Ms. Scott has done a tremendous job working with our youth. She congratulated our Youth Council, and she is very proud to have heard their presentations, they are in tune with the conversations council has been having. She looks forward to working with them and hearing more of their ideas. She appreciates the young lady that talked about voter registration and said the City of Fairburn, for a very long time have always done voter registration and the Fulton County voter registration bus will be here for our Fall Festival as they have been in past years.

Mayor Pro Tem Whitmore said his comments will be directed to the citizens of this great city. He said I've been on council for almost nine years and within those nine years span, I have represented the city in a wonderful way. I raised some hard questions during the budget process and if you notice at the last meeting, none of those questions

that I asked weren't even brought forward to have additional discussion, so I am outraged about that. But I will continue to ask those questions, because you as the citizens have a right to know and the questions that were never answered was dealing with salaries in the City of Fairburn. Astronomically high salaries, but no explanation was given during that process, so yes, it is frustrating. Also, I want to mention the millage rate, now you notice we did not approve a millage rate because we had 35% that was going into the reserve which didn't need to be that high. I am the one that said we should look at not approving that millage rate and I told the mayor when he called me, I would not vote for it. The City Administrator sent a memo that he has hired a legal firm to review last Public Hearing, but we can't seem to get an outside investigation.

Council Member Hudson said she is excited to announce that she has started the intense training at Regional Leadership Institute with ARC. She chose that because she wanted to understand how Fairburn looked from a regional aspect. She looks forward to bringing back things she learns and working with ARC and being a Regional Leader at the table to make sure Fairburn gets its share of the pie. She congratulated our Hispanic community, this is your time to shine, happy Hispanic month. She wants to invite our residents to lock in with her at Civic in the City, which is an online virtual feedback platform that she hosts every month. She asked Administration to make sure for 10-14 council meeting that she is plugged in virtually. She made an announcement that your councilwoman will be jumping the broom, and she will be out of the country. She wants to make sure the residents are active, coming to council and putting your concerns on record. No more will she ask for a request for transparency, today there is a demand for transparency.

Council Member Smallwood thanked everyone for coming and congratulated the youth, that was a great showing and said Ms. Payne does a great job and is a former track star herself, so it's amazing to see her transfer that to the youth. He congratulated Deannia Ray on her accomplishment because you work hard and have been diligently at this for some time, so I appreciate you. You are always professional, always doing the work, congratulations. He said kudos for the election staff, and said they came to his house looking for his daughter to register to vote. They are looking at the young people to get them registered to vote. He also welcomed Ms. Billingsley for joining our team and he saluted Mr. Lester Thompson because he makes sure the developers are doing what they need to do.

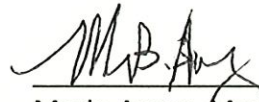
Mayor Avery thanked staff and Open Word Ministries for the great homegoing service of Dr. D'Avante Parks. As his wife puts it, it was a funeral for a King. He said that honor was given by staff, the fire department, and police department. The church was at capacity, he was a great man. The Fairburn Fall Festival is two Saturdays from now. He thanked Nancy Sanchez for all that she does to ensure that the Hispanic community has a voice, who we honored at the Hispanic Third Friday. He thanked the Youth Council who he's looking forward to being a great part of the Fairburn Fall Festival, they will be shadowing staff. The Art in the Alley was beautiful, it was amazing and thanked city staff for all the work they do. He thanked Mr. Berry in the Recreation Department for

doing the programs, activities, and trips they are doing with the seniors. Our Recreation Department is making a mark in the City of Fairburn.

XIV. Adjournment:

Council Member Hudson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Council Member Smallwood provided the second. **The motion carried unanimously.**


Brenda James, City Clerk


Mario Avery, Mayor