



City Council Budget Retreat Minutes
April 17, 2026
8:30 am

I. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones.

1. **Retreat Location: Trilith Guesthouse at 350 Trilith Parkway, Fayetteville, GA 30214**

II. The following members were present:

The Honorable Anatavia M. Benson	The Honorable Linda J. Davis
The Honorable Fannie Mae Houser	The Honorable Shanita Nichols
The Honorable Samuel Perry	The Honorable Ulysses J. Smallwood

Also present were City Administrator Tony Phillips, Assistant City Administrator Jamila Criss, and City Clerk Deannia Ray

III. Day 1 Recap & Day 2 Preview: City Administrator

IV. Regular Agenda:

2. **Police Department Presentation**

Chief Anthony Bazydlo and Deputy Chief Edwin Eiserth gave an overview of their career in law enforcement. Chief Bazydlo provided an overview of the Police Department staff. There are 54 sworn officers, 6 non-sworn civilian staff, and 4 reserve officers. He has three departments to include Uniform Patrol Division, Criminal Investigations Division, and Support Services Division. The Uniform Patrol Division responds to calls for service, routine patrols of the city, motor vehicle accidents, and the "bread and butter" of the Police Department. The Criminal Investigations Division are Detectives, who investigate all major crimes, coordinates prosecution with the District Attorney (DA), and Special Units. The Special Units include traffic units, Special Operations Unit (SOU), and Task Force Officer. The Support Services Division is responsible for Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), State Certification, property, and evidence room, recruiting and hiring, COPS Unit, and training units. The Support Services Division oversees Internal Affairs and Fleet Management.

Fairburn Police Department is a 24/7 full-service agency. They provide police services to Fairburn residents, businesses, and visitors. They police approximately 17 square miles and 17,000+ people. In 2025, they answered 8,233 calls, wrote 3,403 incident reports, 1,034 accident reports and an enormous amount of open records requests. They wrote 7,496 citations and 14,400 warnings. They had 616 arrests and 300 of those were Part 1 crimes.

Deputy Chief Eiswerth discussed the turnover rates and their vision/Strategic Plan for the Police Department. This year they are looking at K9 and next year they will visit drones.

The Police Department set a new record for low Part 1 crime in 2025. They have maintained staffing levels above 90% and their response times for calls is under 6 minutes. They increased in-service training by 10% compared to 2024. They received the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) Grant.

The Police Departments major projects and initiatives include the K9 program, Special Response Team (SRT) implementation, Community Outreach Programs, School Zone Speed Cameras, Renaissance Festival Traffic, and technology enhancements. Theft/Entering Auto is their primary crime concern, with violent crimes remaining low. Chief Eiswerth said he applied for a grant for the electronics canine that looks for electronics regarding child exploitation crimes and they were awarded the grant.

Chief Bazydlo talked about HB651, Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices in School Zones. The traffic control for Renaissance Festival was discussed and said there is a specific need to keep traffic out of Durham Lakes.

3. Fire Department Presentation

Chief Cornelius Robinson said the Fairburn Fire Department holds an ISO Class 1 Rating, which is the highest possible fire protection rating awarded. This classification places Fairburn in the top 1% of the fire departments in the nation and it also keeps homeowners insurance low. Our ISO rating is what attracts businesses to the City of Fairburn. They have 63 full-time employees, 7 command staff and 56 shift personnel divided over 3 shifts. They had a total of 4,114 emergency incidents in 2025. 68% EMS and 42% other for fires, hazardous conditions, alarms, and weather.

Fire Marshall Chris Cambell presented the Community Risk Reduction report and said the Fire Marshal's Office has had 891 inspections, 198 plan reviews, 19 fire investigations, and 48 community outreach calls. They have had over 173 open records requests. Deputy Pope does a lot of those inspections and as we continue to grow, we will need another employee in the Fire Marshalls' office.

The services delivered is their emergency response – fire suppression, emergency medical first responders, vehicle accidents, technical rescue, and hazardous materials. The community risk reduction includes fire inspections and code enforcement, public education and outreach, building plan reviews, and fire hydrant inspections. They discussed having 5 tornado sirens that is located at the downtown depot, John Rivers/29, Duncan Park/Rivertown, Meadow Glen/Senoia, and Creekwood/Bohannon.

Fire Marshall Campbell said all our engines carry EMT's and we respond to all incidents. Mayor gave a shoutout to Chief Robinson on his recruitments, new firefighters are coming in already certified. Chief Robinson said Fairburn is hot right now, they look at our equipment, our resources, etc. Mr. Phillips discussed the referendum that was passed in 2011 to build a new fire station. In 2022, they began updating everything they could. Chief Robinson said looking at us now, we are top notch.

Chief Robinson discussed the new fire department headquarters and said it allows for consolidation of command staff personnel and future growth. They discussed EMS transport and Grady transport. Chief Robinson said the state provides us with transport capability and if there is an emergency we will not wait on Grady and they can transport in severe cases. Mr. Phillips said this is critical decisions and we can transport under those conditions.

4. Utility Assistance Fund Discussion

Assistant City Administrator Jamila Criss discussed the utility assistance fund and said there has been discussions with the residents regarding assistance for their utilities. The City of Lawrenceville started a Utility Round-up program with 70,000 accounts. The City of Fairburn provides 7,312 bills a month and discussed who would be qualified for assistance. Some of the qualifications include being the owner of the account and would have to provide documentation. Mr. Phillips said they are working out details on donations to the program. During COVID, we did not disconnect accounts that were in arrears and so many people could not catch up on their current bills.

Utilities Operations Manager Chelsea Logan said the bills are due on the 16th and there is a 14-day grace period before your water is disconnected. They provide door tags to overdue accounts. Staff discussed robot calls to contact the account that is in arrears. Ms. Criss said we have been disconnecting for over a year and partner with a law firm that is sending the accounts to a collection agency. Utilities Director Derek Hampton said commercial accounts are also behind. Utilities Manager John Martin said we give the commercial accounts a courtesy call. Mr. Hampton suggested we could go to our industrial partners and ask for an annual pledge and have them put some money in our assistance program.

Mr. Phillips said we need attention around this issue, we have an escalating cost that will increase beyond our control. We must be as creative as possible to support those who struggle in paying their utility bills.

5. Utilities Department & Electric Cities of Georgia Presentation

Walter West, President & CEO with ECG discussed the city's operating Electric Enterprise Fund. The analytical services include Electric COS and rate design, rate implementation, billing review/verification, electric PCA and Water/Sewer RAR, and retails monthly bill. He discussed monthly KPI monitoring, performance bench

marking, and ECG AMI solution.

Cathy Johnson, ECG Analyst compared FY24 vs FY26 budget. She discussed the Enterprise Fund and said this fund provides goods or services to the public for a fee that makes the government entity self-supporting. It also makes contributions to the General Funds via fund transfer or franchise fees. Fairburn's electric utility represents decades of community investment. How it is managed today determines what residents and businesses inherit tomorrow. You have three pillars to include operations, budget, and rates. These are not individual pillars that work alone, they all work together. MEAG and ECG are both resources that work on Generation Planning, Transmission Planning, and Distribution Planning. Annual inspections need to happen. Emergency repairs cost a lot more than finding throughout the year.

Electric Rate Comparison- the overall purposes of rates is to generate sufficient revenues to pay for expenses. We need this for weather fluctuations, market price volatility, large customer load loss, and unexpected capital expenditures. Mr. Chunn said the market has become volatile when it is cold, during a storm. You could enter in an agreement with another company for more power. MEAG could look at getting you a good price for extra power so you can use it when needed. You are better off buying reserve from the market.

Mr. Phillips said the PCA is for market adjustments, and once a rate study is done, we will know more. Ms. Johnson said operating expenses increased \$1,140,000. She discussed a recap of the 2024 rate plan and explained a ten-year projection with a rate adjustment. Mayor asked when we could do a rate study. Ms. Johnson said they could do it by the end of the year and it would take about three months.

Utilities Director Derek Hampton discussed his departments organization chart and said the Utilities Department is constantly making strides toward excellence and accuracy. Collections were not being done on the bad debt, and they found water meters indicating a zero consumption for multiple months They have created SOP's within the department now to eliminate these issues. GMA hosted customer training for staff and all meter reader positions have been filled.

Mr. Hampton discussed their upcoming projects to include:

- Emergency replacement of a section of sewer main and connected laterals for Fayetteville Road
- Phase 3 of the water meter change outs to the new AMI meters
- City Lake Road - overhead line rebuild
- Clay Street, Bay Street, and Jonesboro Road - overhead line rebuild
- Hwy 92 - overhead to underground reconductor
- NE Malone Street - overhead line rebuild

Mr. Hampton discussed immediate and long-range plans:

- Work with ISE to determine list of water/sewer mains on our system and costs to place them

- Establish an official Stormwater Division
- Evaluate the Electric Power Cost Adjustment (PCA)
- Build cash reserves to cover unforeseen expenses that occur
- Staff our Power Division so we can omit the dependence on contract labor

6. Public Works / Community Development Department Presentation

Community Development Director Lester Thompson provided an overview of his department to include:

- Oversee land development projects and issue permits to ensure private developments comply with local codes and zoning ordinances
- Support development while maintaining the character and integrity of our city
- Enhance the quality of lives in our community while recognizing the city's historic and natural features

Mr. Thompson reviewed his departments functions:

- Conduct engineering reviews of preliminary plats, concept plans, erosion control plans, clearing and grading plan, hydrology reports, draining plans, utility plans, site development plans, traffic studies to include trip generation analysis and signal warrant analysis, roadways plans, as-builts, final plats, and other engineering related documents associated with private development projects
- Issue timber harvesting permits, clearing, and grading permits, land disturbance permits, and other permits as required
- Conduct erosion control and site development inspections to ensure private development projects comply with local codes and zoning ordinances, our divisions work together to support the community's development while maintaining the character and integrity of the city
- Ensure action is taken to bring code violations into compliance by instructing issuance of notices, stop work orders, citations, etc.

Mr. Thompson discussed functions and accomplishments of his department.

- Conducts transportation planning
- Plans for transportation needs of the city
- Provides traffic engineering support through data collection, data interpretation, traffic control evaluation, and technical recommendations as required by the FHWA and GDOT
- Collaborates with ARC, GDOT, EPD, Fulton County, South Fulton CID, and other agencies
- Provides project management, construction management, contract administration, Construction Engineering & Inspection (CEI), and procurement services

Mr. Thompson reviewed the departments accomplishments and discussed pending developments to include:

- Overview of Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program; ES&PC Overview

- report, Georgia EPD, GA Soil & Water Conservation Commission
- Gullatt Road Interchange Justification Report (IJR)
- Received FY2025 Safety Action Plan (SAP) Award of \$461,525 to install 5 RRFBs on John Rivers Road at the existing golf cart crossing and proposed mid-block crossings associated with the John River Road Pedestrian Improvements Project
- Completed 2025 Roadway Improvements on various city roads, 6.7 miles

Mr. Thompson discussed pending developments that are under construction: Trillium Reserve Subdivision, Vickers Point Subdivision, Meribel Townhomes, Meadow Glen Village, Cury Bend Development, Legend Creek, and Oakmont Bohannon.

Mr. Thompson discussed capital projects to include 2026 roadway improvements, I-85 & SR 74/Senoia Road Interchange Project, Oakley Industrial Blvd Left turn lane project, and Duncan Park Road New Location Roadway Project.

Mr. Thompson discussed the speed table policy and said the city will consider the installation of speed tables only on streets classified as a local, residential road with a posted speed limit of 25 mph and a minimum length of 1000 feet. Traffic studies conducted must find a speeding problem exists based on a standard eighty-fifth percentile of at least ten miles per hour over the posted speed limit. No less than 85% of the property owners on each residential street must indicate an affirmative preference for speed tables, as documented by petition. He discussed the cost of speed bumps and suggested potential funding be placed in Capital Projects.

Mr. Thompson discussed the Pedestrian Improvements Project: Strickland Street, John Rivers Road, W. Broad Street, Fayetteville Road Streetscape Project, Plantation Road/Harris Road, W Broad Street Streetscape. He discussed the CDBG Pedestrian Improvements projects to include Mullis Steet, Orchard & Strickland Street, West Campbellton Street, Bay Street Pedestrian Improvements Project.

Mr. Thompson discussed the CSX silent crossings and said under the Federal Train Horn rule, locomotive engineers are required to sound train horns in advance of all public at-grade crossings. Federal regulation also provides an opportunity for localities to mitigate the effects of train horn noise by establishing new Quiet Zones.

The proposed quiet zone are the four CSX at grade crossings: Jonesboro Road, Broad Street, Senoia Road, and Roberts Street. The quiet zone field diagnostic was held February 6, 2026.

Mr. Thompson discussed TSPLOST projects. A Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) is a sales tax used to fund capital outlay projects proposed by a county government and municipal governments. A Transportation SPLOST (TSPLOST) is a sales tax where the capital outlays are intended for transportation purposes only. The current referendum voted on November 2, 2021. 1% goes to the General Fund of the State of Georgia Treasury, 0.5% goes to Fulton County for County oversight and administration costs. The remaining 98.5% goes to the "cities," distribution is based on population.

7. General Services Department Presentation

General Services Director Gale Higgs said they have 19 employees in the General Services department and they are here to manage, maintain, and improve roadways, walkways, traffic signals, street signs, as well as the rights-of-way, easements, and city properties. General Services works collaboratively with all city departments to make events flow effortlessly. The functions of the department include:

- Right of Way Maintenance
- Sidewalk repair
- Drain clean out
- Debris removal
- Potholes
- Road patchwork repair
- Sign repair/replacements
- Decorative signs landscaping
- Tires & trees
- Events/setup
- Fleet maintenance

Ms. Higgs discussed city vehicles and the garage and said they procure and dispose of city vehicles in a timely and efficient manner. Currently they have 175 vehicles total in city fleet and 103 of those are through the Enterprise program. They have a 2-bay garage, with a 3-person team and they service all city vehicles, excluding fire apparatus.

Ms. Higgs discussed their accomplishments to include:

- Subdivision signs/with logos
- Sidewalks repaired throughout the city
- All CPR and flagger certified
- Leads received A/B Fuel Operator Certification
- Cross training employees on equipment
- Successful Spring and Fall cleanups (Amnesty Days)
- Dumped tire removals (Over 3,000)

Ms. Higgs discussed projects to include removal of trees in front of Duncan Park, Woodland Hills Detention/Retention Pond Clean out, continuous sidewalk repair and continuous sign upgrade with the logo. Ms. Higgs discussed the issue with decorative signs and costs. The General Services and Garage Maintenance teams will continue to strive to be the best at what they do.

V. Adjournment:

The Retreat ended at 5:00 p.m.


Deannia Ray, City Clerk


Hattie Portis-Jones, Mayor