



Special Called City Council Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2026
4:30 PM

- I. Meeting Called to Order by Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones.
- II. Roll Call by City Clerk Deannia Ray found the following members present:

The Honorable Anatavia M. Benson The Honorable Shanita Nichols
The Honorable Fannie Mae Houser The Honorable Samuel Perry (virtual)

Absent: The Honorable Ulysses J. Smallwood
The Honorable Linds J. Davis

Also present were City Administrator Tony Phillips, Assistant City Administrator Jamila Criss, Deputy City Attorney Serena Nowell, and City Clerk Deannia Ray.

- III. Invocation was provided by City Administrator Tony Phillips.
- IV. Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.
- V. Civility Pledge: The way we govern ourselves is often as important as the positions we take. Our collective decisions will be better when differing views have had the opportunity to be fully vetted and considered. All people have the right to be treated with respect, courtesy, and openness. We value all input. We commit to conduct ourselves at all times with civility and courtesy to each other.

Council Member Benson read the civility pledge.

- VI. Adoption of the City Council Agenda:

Council Member Benson made a motion to approve the agenda as printed. Council Member Houser provided the second. **The motion carried unanimously.**

- VII. Regular Agenda:

1. **Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Final Budget Amendment**

Assistant City Administrator Jamila Criss presented the final Fiscal Year 2024–2025 budget amendment and explained the adjustment process is a standard part of completing the annual audit. She said once the auditors complete their review, budget amendments are made to align accounts before the audit is completed and presented to mayor and council. Ms. Criss said there were no changes to the General Fund, which is still at \$38,210,896.00. She outlined four budget alignments, including adjustments related to GASB 87 lease accounting standards requiring lease payments previously

classified under contracted services to be reallocated to principal and interest. She said the adjustments included an \$800,000.00 realignment within the City Administrator's budget, a \$40,000.00 grant adjustment for police purchases, and lease payment reallocation related to two fire vehicles within the Capital Equipment and Improvement Fund. Ms. Criss explained the final adjustment involved the \$24.5 million GO Bond for the Public Safety Complex, noting the bond revenues had not previously been realized within the budget due to the timing of the bond closing. She said the amendment increases other funds to \$76,582,127.00, bringing the city's total revenue fund budget to \$114,793,023.00.

Council Member Benson made a motion to bring the item to the floor for discussion. Council Member Perry provided the second. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Councilmember Houser said the explanations helped her better understand how the funds and bond allocations operate.

Mayor Portis-Jones asked for more explanation on GASB standards. Ms. Criss explained how GASB establishes governmental accounting guidelines that all municipalities must follow. GASB 87 requires certain lease obligations to be categorized under principal and interest. City Administrator Tony Phillips said GASB stands for Governmental Accounting Standards Board and explained municipalities are required to adopt updated standards to maintain audit compliance and financial transparency. He added new GASB standards are implemented regularly and often require year-end budget amendments and reallocations.

Councilmember Nichols requested clarification about the increase in the city's total budget revenues and asked if the amendments were primarily tied to financing activities and capital projects. Ms. Criss explained on September 9, 2024, mayor and council passed the FY 2024–2025 budget, consisting of \$36,525,488.00 in the General Fund and \$47,712,752.00 in other funds, for a total budget of \$84,238,240.00. A budget amendment was approved by mayor and council on May 12, 2025, that increased the General Fund to \$38,210,896.00 and other funds to \$52,027,826.00, for a total budget of \$90,238,722.00.

Ms. Criss said the prior budget amendment included \$1,162,592.00 added to the Capital Fund, included \$562,592.00 for Public Works related to the spelling of Interstate 85 "Fairburn" bridge signage project and \$600,000.00 for Public Safety Complex design costs. She said additional allocations included \$60,000.00 for building operations, repairs, and janitorial services, \$35,000.00 for technology server upgrades and increased network capacity. Risk Management received \$15,000.00 for AED equipment and fire suppression. Parks salaries and wages were \$114,000.00, Parks and Recreation programming was \$28,000.00, Economic Development initiatives and grants of \$124,000.00, Planning and Zoning received \$7,500.00 for advertising, printing, and postage. Human Resources received \$30,000.00 for the Classification and Compensation Study that was requested by mayor and council. Ms. Criss stated the General Fund received an overall increase of \$1,685,408.00. We put \$800,000.00 in water and sewer for emergency repairs, the Serve Line Protection Program contract,

and technical services. Stormwater received \$500,00.00 for repairs and Electric received \$500,000.00 for repairs. Electric Administration received \$35,000.00 for newsletter costs as well as salaries. Ms. Criss explained the current amendment is primarily a cleanup and realignment of budget categories required under GASB 87 and recognition of the \$24.5 million GO Bond issued for the Public Safety Complex, which had not previously been reflected in the budget due to the timing of the bond closing. Staff clarified most of the accounting adjustments net to zero and do not stand for new operational spending.

Councilmember Nichols asked for clarification regarding the prior budget amendment and whether the current amendment recognizes the Public Safety Complex bond proceeds that were not included in the earlier amendment. Ms. Criss said the bond had not closed at the time of the May 12, 2025, budget amendment and therefore could not be accounted for in the budget. Mr. Phillips said the bond issuance process is lengthy and involves multiple financial and bond agencies, making it difficult to predict when a bond will be finalized. He said although the city anticipated issuing a bond for the Public Safety Complex, it could not be reflected in the budget until the bond was officially issued and approved.

Councilmember Nichols said she was trying to understand the process and asked whether the \$24.5 million GO Bond is dedicated to the Public Safety Complex. Ms. Criss confirmed the bond proceeds are restricted to the project and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Councilmember Nichols asked about the \$426,000.00 adjustment within the Capital Fund. Ms. Criss explained the adjustment relates to the ladder truck and engine truck leases approved by mayor and council in 2022. She said the lease payments were originally budgeted within Capital but, pursuant to GASB 87 requirements, are being reclassified to principal and interest. Ms. Criss said the funds were already budgeted and the adjustment simply moves the expenditure to the appropriate accounting category. Mr. Phillips said the adjustment is a realignment required to comply with GASB 87 guidelines and does not represent new funding or additional expenditures but rather places the funds in the appropriate accounting category.

Councilmember Nichols asked how similar adjustments would be accounted for in future fiscal years. Mr. Phillips said the circumstances that lead to end-of-year budget amendments typically occur every year because there are costs and accounting requirements that cannot always be anticipated when the budget is adopted. He said GASB may issue new guidelines after budget adoption that require financial realignments and noted that, other than the \$24.5 million GO Bond, most of the current adjustments net to zero and do not represent new funding, but rather the reclassification of funds to comply with accounting standards.

Councilmember Nichols asked how the amendment would affect the city's reserves and overall financial position. Ms. Criss said the budget cleanup has no impact on the city's reserve funds and only affects budgeted revenues. She said if mayor and council approve the amendment, Mauldin and Jenkins will finalize the audit and have it

available for distribution before June 1. Ms. Criss added that Mauldin and Jenkins are expected to present the audit to mayor and council at the June 8 meeting and provide an in-depth review of the audit and the city's financial condition.

Mr. Phillips stated the audit will provide a detailed picture of the city's prior fiscal year financial posture and overall financial health. He said the upcoming budget development process will include a comprehensive review of every department budget, debt service obligation, reserve balance, and fiscal year fund balance. Mayor and council will be required to make significant decisions regarding allocation of resources for the next fiscal year. The budget process takes several months and includes multiple public hearings and departmental presentations. Pursuant to the city charter, the City Administrator is required to submit a proposed budget to mayor and council by August 1 each year, which serves as the formal beginning of the council's budget review process. Proposed budgets, prior budgets, audits, public hearings, and budget discussions are available to the public through in-person attendance, online platforms, and the city's website to ensure transparency throughout the budgeting process.

Councilmember Nichols asked if there is a payout schedule associated with the bond debt and whether the debt has implications for taxpayers. Deputy City Attorney Serena Nowell said the city utilizes two types of bonds: general obligation bonds and revenue bonds. Revenue bonds are repaid through revenues generated by the utility system, while general obligation debt is paid through the city's debt service account and supported in part through property tax revenues. Residents may see a line item for GO Bonds on their property tax bills because those revenues help service the debt associated with capital projects such as the Public Safety Complex. Mr. Phillips said revenue bonds are commonly used by municipalities to address aging infrastructure needs, to include replacement of sewer lines, water lines, and electric poles. Infrastructure improvements require significant investment, and revenue bonds are one of the primary financing tools cities use to fund those projects and keep essential utility systems.

Councilmember Perry requested clarification about the Interstate 85 signage project and utility-related impacts on residents. Ms. Criss said the illuminated signage portion of the project was approximately \$367,000 and explained the previously approved \$562,592 allocation included repaving of the VFW parking lot requested by Public Works. Mr. Phillips explained utility costs are primarily driven by power, water, and sewer expenses and said the city has historically used ARPA funding to provide utility help to residents. He said Enterprise Funds are needed to remain balanced to avoid deficits and keep the city's financial posture and bond ratings.

Mayor Portis-Jones said the purpose of the meeting was to satisfy the auditors requested adjustments for compliance with GASB standards and clarified the amendment realigns budget categories rather than changing the General Fund total.

Council Member Benson made a motion to approve an Ordinance to adopt the final amended FY 2024-2025 budget. Council Member Houser provided the second. **The motion passed 3-1 with Council Member Nichols abstaining.**

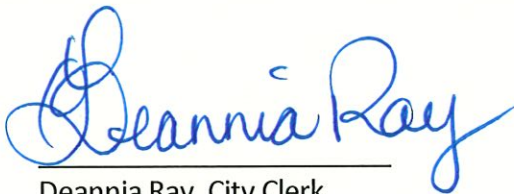
2. Election of GMA's District 3 Southwest Officers for 2026 – 2028

City Administrator Tony Phillips explained the item would authorize the city to submit its official nomination form to the Georgia Municipal Association for the District 3 Southwest officers for the 2026–2028 term, each city is allowed one ballot. GMA is divided into districts throughout the state and Fairburn falls within the District 3 Southwest region. The ballot includes nominations for Mayor Hattie Portis-Jones as President and Councilmember Ruby Foster of Chattahoochee Hills as Vice President for the 2026–2028 term.

Council Member Benson made a motion to approve the nominations for the GMA District 3 Southwest Officers for the 2026–2028 term and to authorize City Administrator Tony Phillips to sign the ballot. Council Member Nichols provided the second. **The motion carried unanimously.**

VIII. Adjournment:

Council Member Benson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:21 pm. Council Member Nichols provided the second. **The motion carried unanimously.**



Deannia Ray, City Clerk



Hattie-Portis-Jones, Mayor