



City Council Work Session
Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2026
6:00 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 Linds 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, City Attorney Rory Starkey, Deputy City Attorney Serena Nowell, and City Clerk Deannia Ray.

- III. Agenda Items:

1. Strategic Plan Debriefing- LeaderGov

Mr. Bill Stark with LeaderGov presented the draft 2026 Strategic Plan. He reviewed the community engagement process, which included resident meetings, surveys, council interviews, and staff discussions regarding the city's strengths, challenges, and future goals. He said the plan establishes the city's vision, mission, organizational values, strategic priorities, and implementation goals and emphasizes the importance of accountability, communication, and ongoing progress tracking.

Mr. Stark reviewed the city's four strategic priorities:

- Economic Development and Expansion
- Strengthening Citizen Engagement
- Enhancing Quality of Life and Community Identity
- Modernizing Infrastructure

Mr. Stark said the Strategic Plan should remain stable unless major circumstances require adjustments and explained the Comprehensive Plan focuses primarily on land use and development patterns, while the Strategic Plan addresses the broader operational direction of city government.

Mayor Portis-Jones asked Mr. Stark to explain the difference between the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan. Mr. Stark said the Comprehensive Plan

primarily focuses on land use, zoning patterns, development layout, transportation, signage, and the physical appearance of the city, while the Strategic Plan addresses all aspects of city government and organizational priorities. Mayor Portis-Jones asked why cities do not complete strategic plans and requested additional information regarding the importance of vision and mission statements. Mr. Stark said cities without strategic plans often operate reactively rather than proactively and may make decisions without a broader long-term framework. He stated vision and mission statements provide guidance for future decisions and help ensure actions remain aligned with the city's goals and identity.

Council Member Davis commented on the strong public participation during the Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan process and asked if residents expressed why they chose to attend and participate. Mr. Stark said residents wanted their voices heard and recognized local government as a place where they can directly influence decisions affecting their community. He said participants were highly engaged and demonstrated a desire to help shape the future direction of Fairburn. Council Member Davis said residents may have become more involved after zoning and development discussions highlighted the importance of participating in city planning efforts. She said she was impressed by the level of engagement and felt residents wanted to take ownership of the city's future. Council Member Davis then asked if cost may be one reason cities choose not to develop Strategic Plans. Mr. Stark said some communities may view strategic planning as an additional expense. Council Member Davis added governments may avoid Strategic Plans because stated goals create accountability. Mr. Stark agreed accountability can become a concern when governments formally commit to long-term objectives and measurable projects.

Council Member Nichols asked how the city can ensure the Strategic Plan remains active and transparent moving forward. Mr. Stark recommended quarterly progress updates from staff, ongoing public communication, and continued evaluation of future initiatives against adopted strategic priorities. He stated residents should be able to use the plan to hold leadership accountable for implementation and progress.

Mayor Portis-Jones asked staff to discuss how the Strategic Plan was developed and how newly elected officials participated in the process. Assistant City Administrator Jamila Criss said the strategic planning effort began the previous year and included retreat discussions with mayor and council. She said newly elected officials were provided opportunities to review the draft plan, offer feedback, and suggest revisions. Ms. Criss said department heads also participated to ensure goals aligned with council priorities and achievable objectives.

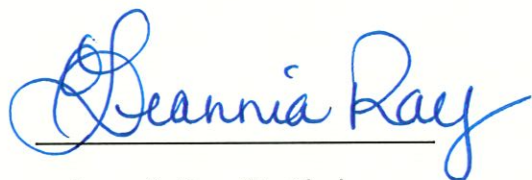
City Administrator Tony Phillips emphasized the Strategic Plan contains measurable goals, timelines, and benchmarks that require ongoing commitment and accountability. He said successful implementation will depend on continuous monitoring, reporting, and progress evaluation.

Additional discussion focused on alignment between the Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan. Planning and Zoning Director Denise Brookins said both planning efforts were intentionally coordinated to ensure consistency between future development decisions and citywide priorities. She discussed goals related to economic development, housing, mixed-use development, downtown revitalization, transportation improvements, infrastructure planning, and preservation of downtown Fairburn's historic character.

Council Member Perry emphasized the importance of resident participation throughout the planning process and stated the plans reflect the vision and priorities expressed by the community. Mayor Portis-Jones agreed and said the city's responsibility moving forward is to strategically implement the plans, monitor progress, and adjust as necessary.

IV. Adjournment:

Mayor Portis-Jones adjourned the work session meeting.



Deannia Ray, City Clerk



Hattie-Portis-Jones, Mayor