

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Zack Thompson, Juli Hayes, Abigail Guzman, Barbara Brooks, Jon Elliott
VACANT POSITION: Ward 1
STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Lackey, Angela Sheppard, Abb Hayes, Alisa Grayson

Mayor Thompson called the meeting to order and served as the presiding officer.

DEPARTMENT ISSUES:

Resolution: Georgia Transit Trust Fund Program (GTTFP) 2026

Community Service Center Director Phillippa Lewis Moss stated allocations have been received from the GTTFP for the past three years. The fund amount received this year is \$263,573 with no local match requirement. It will be used to purchase two prototype electric/hybrid vehicles. Remaining funds can be used towards transit/facilities property improvements.

Placed on the February 17, 2026 Council Meeting Consent Agenda

Public Hearing Item: February 17, 2026, Council Meeting

Request from Gainesville Housing Authority to rezone a 4.547± acres tract located on the northwest side of the intersection of Myrtle Street and Osborne Street and the northeast side of the intersection of Myrtle Street and Wall Street, south of Jesse Jewell Parkway (a/k/a 1197 and 1235 Myrtle Street, SE; 452, 474, 484, 492, 510 and 512 Osborne Street, SE; 465, 471 and 481 Wall Street, SE) from Planned Unit Development (P-U-D) and Residential-II (R-II) to Planned Unit Development (P-U-D). Ward Number: Three. Tax Parcel Number(s): 01-035-001-005, 007, 008, 013, 013A, 015, 017, 019 and 020. Request: Mixed-income housing.

Public Hearing Item: February 17, 2026, Council Meeting

Request from Gainesville Construction LLC to amend an existing Planned Unit Development (P-U-D) zoning on a 0.14± acre tract located on the southwest side of the intersection of Lanier Avenue and Juanita Avenue (a/k/a 946 Lanier Avenue, NE and 1387 Juanita Avenue, NE). Ward Number: One. Tax Parcel Number (s): 01-087-003-008. Request: Duplex apartment.

City Attorney Abb Hayes summarized the applications and asked that questions be referred to the Community and Economic Development Department staff.

Public hearing items advertised for the February 17, 2026 Council Meeting Agenda

MAYOR/COUNCIL ISSUES:

Council Member Hayes

Provided a Parks and Recreation Board ex-officio report and noted they received a favorable audit report.

Mayor Thompson

1. Nominated Oliver Ladd to serve on the Metropolitan Planning Organization - Citizens Advisory Committee.
2. Nominated Kelley Clark to serve on the Parks & Recreation Foundation Board.
3. Nominated Courtney Mize-Smith to serve on the Parks & Recreation Board.

Appointments placed on the February 17, 2026 Council Meeting Consent Agenda

CITY ATTORNEY ISSUES:

Resolution: Appointment of Development Review Committee Members Relating to the Gainesville 85 Business Park

City Attorney Abb Hayes stated the business park has covenants that govern its development. The request appoints Bryan Lackey, Rusty Ligon, Tim Evans, Linda MacGregor and Jeremy Perry to the Development Review Committee.

Placed on the February 17, 2026 Council Meeting Consent Agenda

Resolution: Business Park Intergovernmental Agreement By and Between City of Gainesville and Gainesville-Hall County Development Authority Regarding Marketing and Sale of Lot 7 in Business Park

City Attorney Abb Hayes stated the proposed resolution authorizes the transfer of Lot 7 to the Development Authority no later than April 24, 2026 for sale of the property at no less than \$2M.

Placed on the February 17, 2026 Council Meeting Consent Agenda

Resolution: Business Park Intergovernmental Agreement By and Between City of Gainesville and Gainesville-Hall County Development Authority Regarding Marketing and Sale of Lots 18, 19, and 20 in Business Park

City Attorney Abb Hayes stated the proposed resolution is similar to the previous item with plans to transfer the property to the Development Authority no later than September 11, 2026 for sale at a minimum of \$200,000 per acre.

Placed on the February 17, 2026 Council Meeting Consent Agenda

Ordinance: Amend Chapter 3-7 Entitled Smoke-Free Air

City Attorney Abb Hayes stated staff was approached by the American Heart Association (AHA) as part of a state-wide smoking ordinance review. This amendment modernizes and strengthens our current smoke-free ordinance. It confirms no smoking except in private residences, and no smoking in playgrounds and city sponsored public events. Council Member Juli Hayes felt this was a great partnership with the AHA and a step forward for a healthy community.

Placed on the February 17, 2026 Council Meeting Agenda

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

City Attorney Abb Hayes requested an Executive Session to discuss real estate matters.

Motion to close the meeting to enter an Executive Session to discuss real estate matters at 9:10 AM.

Motion made by Council Member Hayes

Motion seconded by Council Member Guzman

Votes favoring the motion: Hayes, Guzman, Brooks, Elliott

Vacant: Ward 1

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Zack Thompson, Juli Hayes, Abigail Guzman, Barbara Brooks, Jon Elliott

VACANT POSITION: Ward 1
STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Lackey, Abb Hayes, Angela Sheppard, Alisa Grayson

Motion to close the Executive Session at 9:45 AM.

Motion made by Council Member Brooks
Motion seconded by Council Member Hayes
Votes favoring the motion: Hayes, Guzman, Brooks, Elliott
Vacant: Ward 1

City Manager stated the meeting will reconvene at the Community Service Center for a tour and presentations.

Recess: 9:46 AM
Reconvene: 10:15 AM

COUNCIL TOUR: (Community Service Center, 430 Prior Street, SE)

OTHER STAFF PRESENT: Jeremy Perry

Facility Tour

A tour of the Senior Life Center was conducted and ended at 10:36 AM.

PRESENTATIONS:

City Manager Bryan Lackey commented on the two annual retreats and briefly shared how they were conducted in the past. This year we're pivoting to a different way of conducting the retreats which will be a more hands on, informal and compressed approach. The retreat sessions will be incorporated with several scheduled Work Sessions. He also commented on the upcoming retreat to be held in Greenville, SC on March 4-6, 2026 and briefly summarized the planned agenda.

Council Member Hayes expressed appreciation to staff for their creativity and efforts in managing the retreats for Council.

Community Service Center

Community Service Center Director Phillipa Lewis Moss began her presentation by sharing the CSC's mission as well as information about the number of staff, the operating and capital expense budgets and properties. She also shared some accomplishments related to the Senior Services Center, Hall Area Transit and Community Trust Fund. Notable comments about the accomplishments were as follows:

- The Meals on Wheels program services approximately 550 households with 250 volunteers.
- The CSC will host the first annual Georgia Meals on Wheels Association conference this year.
- Staff Member Stepheine Hood was identified as the future Meals on Wheels of America at the National Meals on Wheels Conference.
- The WeGo service received 166,721 demands for rides of which 93,555 were completed.
- There were a little under 15,000 trips for the Gainesville trolley service.
- The Community Trust Fund raised \$54,916 this year.

Challenges included meeting the demand for ridership of which 25% of the demand goes unmet due to various reasons. Upon inquiry from Council Member Thompson, Mrs. Moss confirmed the difference between the amount for met demand and completed rides. She noted Gainesville's stats/percentages rate is about the same as the other surrounding governments with ride share services. Council Member Hayes asked how many more vehicles and drivers were needed to meet the gap at which time Mrs. Moss stated it would take 25 vehicles being on the road every hour until 6 PM and 8 to 10 vehicles after 6 PM.

She commented on challenges with cognitive decline being on the rise and noted it was expected to double in the next few years. She shared the stats for Alzheimer's in the United States and Georgia. She also shared ways in which they use opportunities to monitor the well-being of the community and community outreach.

Initiatives included the following:

- A \$500,000 trust from the Ann Thompson Family and plans to run a campaign to match the funds.
- Creation of a Memory Café and Festival of Songs Event.
- Renovation of a new transit parking facility.
- A WeGo Operator Retention Campaign to address the retention challenges.
- WeGo Electric Hybrid Vehicles purchases.
- The Unity Center: Pilot Fixed Route Project (Goal: Create a single route 2+ days/week to transport residents).
- Gainesville Trolley Expansion to include returning routes and a potential expansion.

Comments/Questions were noted as follows:

- *The challenges of being a driver due to the environment.*
- *Suggested rotating drivers' positions/routes/schedules.*
- *What are the hiring requirements?*

Council Member Guzman extended appreciation noting the transit service has been very beneficial to her staff.

Parks & Recreation Department

City Manager Bryan Lackey noted the Parks & Recreation budget will be presented at a future meeting.

Parks & Recreation Director Kate Mattison shared a copy of the Parks & Recreation annual report and noted it represented a snapshot of the past year. She presented information about the following accomplishments:

- Completed their 6th reaccreditation process last year.
- For their recreation accomplishments:
 - the Wilshire Wonderland was a big hit with a turnout of 28,000 visitors
 - started an adult pickup soccer at the Coop and an adult flag football
 - increased participation in the youth flag football as well as the swim team
- Upgrades at the Frances Meadows facility included indoor pool resurfacing, locker room upgrades, HVAC replacements, fitness floor improvements and new splash zone features.
- Upgrades to Roper Park are coming along.

- The Coop hosted 49 tournaments in 44 weeks of operations. The economic impact for just the tournaments was \$3.2M last year.

Council Member Thompson inquired about the rental fees and the concessions.

She shared the challenges associated with some capital projects to include the Dogwood Pavilion at Longwood Park, the Longwood Park bridge, the Corps and the Parkland acreage. In regards to the Civic Center, challenges were with acquiring a backup generator due to the astronomical expense associated with the age of the building, and issues with the elevator. In addition to the elevator issues, ADA access concerns needed to be addressed. Felt a ramp could solve the issue for access to the second floor. Lastly, she shared the challenges associated with succession planning noting concerns with several key staff members retiring within the next three to five years.

The initiatives included updates to the master plan implementation noting 91% of the action steps in the plan are ongoing, in progress or complete. The operations and programming initiatives for Linwood are changing to include an outdoor education center to provide nature education programming and adventure recreation for an extreme sports camp. As it relates to Desota Park, they have been working on the concept and moved this project to the top of the list. She shared the challenges with the layout of the park and what may be the best concept for the layout. She referenced a potential future trail connection. She shared a concept for a potential Rec Center using SPLOST funds. A new concept for Holly Park was also shared.

Administrative Services Department

Administrative Services Director Janeann Allison shared the department's accomplishments which included information about an Accreditation Pilot Participation program noting former employee Vikki Fox-Wilson assisted with it. It was a 3-day comprehensive review by a panel. She introduced Deputy Director of Human Resources and Employee Relations Kim Leon, Deputy Director of Benefits and Payroll Tiffany Hills, and Deputy Director of Municipal Court Angie Floyd. The Employee Recognition Event was scheduled for Tuesday, February 17. Another accomplishment they've worked hard on is the GET program which allows employees to sign up to visit other departments. It has been very successful.

Mrs. Allison shared challenges which included employee retention and retirement. She referenced the position data that reflected a turnover rate of 11.6% and a loss of 404 years of combined knowledge due to retirements. She noted the upcoming retirements will impact the city greatly. They are working hard on succession planning but it will be challenging over the next 10 years.

For initiatives, she commented on issues with the Paycom (payroll) software system, clinic management as it relates to the administrative processes, and drug testing facilities. With these concerns, they are considering researching potential vendors and/or alternatives. Council Member Hayes expressed appreciation for the clinic noting it is a great benefit.

Another initiative shared is the Gainesville Leadership Academy which assists in retaining employees by offering learning opportunities focused on leadership, strategies and techniques. Other initiatives noted were department visits, more appreciation events, best hiring practices, great benefits and competitive pay. Training opportunities was also a focus.

Mrs. Allison presented accomplishments related to Municipal Court and noted the Municipal Court staff is a great group that cares very much for the community. Accomplishments included a drivers education event, a career day event at Oakwood Elementary School, and a Junior Justice Seekers event.

She shared a scenario that provided an opportunity for development and advancement where staff assisted an elderly citizen that needed help. Other challenges included combatting text scams and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the courtroom.

The initiatives shared included a bench warrant amnesty program, a pathway to resolution for a citation, and a community impact initiative which is a giving back program where staff teamed up with two non-profit organizations to give back to the community.

Council Member Brooks expressed appreciation for the Human Resources staff in assisting her with a payroll matter.

Information Technology (IT)

Chief Information Officer Russ Hilmandolar shared the departments accomplishments and achievements which included the following:

- Awarded the Digital Cities Award (3rd Place)
- Customer Service satisfaction with a 98% customer satisfaction rate
- IT project execution with a 95% successful completion rate

Challenges and opportunities consisted of empowering growth and innovation through managing the roll out of new technology and current systems; Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the SB 37- AI Accountability Act which would require cities to publish an AI plan by December 31, 2026; and cybersecurity that requires everyone to stay focused on prevention. He commented on the security management program which drives awareness.

He shared the initiatives related to management of workloads, capabilities and efficiencies, as well as their bench strength in high demand areas; an AI strategy, policy and governance process; and cybersecurity with a focus on evaluations, audits and requirements.

City Manager Bryan Lackey wrapped up the presentations with closing remarks and shared the upcoming meetings/retreat schedule.

Mayor Thompson thanked staff for their presentations and commented on being pleased with the meeting format change.

ADJOURNMENT: 12:17 PM

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