

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.

Mayor Thompson recognized and welcomed newly elected Council Member Ward 1 Bob Norton who was in attendance.

BUDGET PRESENTATIONS:

Elachee Nature Science Center

President/CEO Sarah Bell, Chief Operating Officer Amy Bradford, and Development Director Erin Askounis represented the center. Ms. Bell commented on their new team members and the team's commitment to community. She shared a snapshot of the center's FY 2026 accomplishments and FY 2027 plans and noted their goal is accessibility to programs and the preserve. She also shared information about an exhibit development in collaboration with Gainesville City Schools, Gainesville Water Resources, University of North Georgia and Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and an environmental education partnership with the Gainesville Parks and Recreation.

Amy Bradford stated their goal is to be a connector of community resources. She commented on program participation and support efforts throughout the community, specifically the city and noted the funding request of \$50,000 helps support these initiatives and collaborative efforts.

Upon request from Mayor Thompson, Ms. Bell provided a detailed description of the new exhibit and noted it will include an aquatic habitat feature.

Council Member Hayes commented on being proud of the center and all that they do. Council Member Guzman commented on her visit to the center and the Adult Camp event she attended. They briefly commented on the Dome which is a new component of the center.

DEPARTMENT ISSUES:

Public Hearing Item: March 17, 2026, Council Meeting

Request from Capstone Property Group to amend an existing Planned Unit Development (P-U-D) zoning on a 38.531± acres tract located on the northeast side of Ivey Road at its terminus, having road frontage on Lost River Drive and Lost River Lane (a/k/a 3058 and 3070 Ivey Road, SW; 3002, 3005, 3006, 3010, 3011, 3014, 3015, 3018, 3021, 3022, 3025, 3029, 3032, 3035, 3036, 3040 and 3044 Lost River Drive, SW; 3003, 3008, 3012 and 3030 Lost River Lane, SW). Ward Number: Four. Tax Parcel Number(s): 08-020-000-028, 038, 039, 040, 041, 042, 043, 044, 045, 046, 047, 048, 049, 050, 051, 052, 053, 054, 055, 056, 057, 058 and 059. Request: Luxury hotel resort and residential.

Public Hearing Item: March 17, 2026, Council Meeting

Request from Greg Loyd to annex a 0.23± acre tract located on the south side of West Side Drive, between Pearl Nix Parkway and Tate Street (a/k/a 1507 West Side Drive) and to establish a zoning of Residential-II (R-II). Ward Number: Five. Tax Parcel Number(s): 00-126-004-003. 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 March 17, 2026 Council Meeting Agenda

CITY MANAGER ISSUES:

Facility Tour

City Manager Bryan Lackey stated he was looking forward to today's tour.

MAYOR/COUNCIL ISSUES:

Council Member Guzman

Welcomed newly elected Ward 1 Council Member Bob Norton.

Council Member Hayes

1. Expressed appreciation to staff for all their planning efforts with the retreat in Greenville, SC on last week noting it was very informative.
2. Stated the Girl Scout Women of Distinction luncheon was a great event.
3. Asked for thoughts and prayers for all affected by the loss of North Hall High School member Jason Hughes.
4. Welcomed Ward 1 Council Member Bob Norton.

Appointments: Parks & Recreation Foundation Board

Mayor Thompson nominated Timothy Avers and Peter Dcosta for reappointment.

Placed on the March 17, 2026 Council Meeting Consent Agenda

Mayor Thompson

Commented on a great retreat in Greenville, SC and appreciation for the new format of conducting onsite mini-retreats with the different departments.

CITY ATTORNEY ISSUES:

Resolution: Property Acquisition from E.K. Martin, Sr. Properties, LLC

City Attorney Abb Hayes presented the proposed resolution to approve closing on a purchase and sale agreement with E. K. Martin. Sr. Properties, LLC. He noted this is the old Lanier Tent property and the billboard issues with Fairway have been resolved. The property will be converted into a park and add to the continuing development of the Greenway and trail. Council Member Brooks expressed her excitement with this.

Placed on the March 17, 2026 Council Meeting Consent Agenda

CITY CLERK ISSUES:

Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Annual Convention

City Clerk Alisa Grayson reported registration information for the convention was available and will be distributed in preparation of the online registration.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

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

Motion to close the meeting to enter an Executive Session to discuss real estate and legal matters at 9:20 AM.

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

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Zack Thompson, Juli Hayes, Abigail Guzman, Barbara Brooks, Jon Elliott
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STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Lackey, Abb Hayes, Angela Sheppard, Rusty Ligon, Alisa Grayson

Motion to close the Executive Session at 10:11 AM.

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

Recess: 10:12 AM
Reconvene: 10:40 AM

COUNCIL TOUR: (Lee Gilmer Memorial Airport, 1137 Aviation Way)

A tour of the Airport facility and Fieldale Farms hanger was conducted and ended at 11:14 AM.

Public Works Director Chris Rotalsky briefly shared information related to the challenges with the runway extension and hangar space. Airport Manager Lisa Poole commented on the ALP (Airport Layout Plan) and audit.

PRESENTATIONS:

Tourism

Tourism Director Robyn Lynch shared the accomplishments, challenges/opportunities, and initiatives of the department. Notable comments were as follows:

- Tourism
 - Hotel/Motel tax revenue continues to grow.
 - Several awards were received to include the Main Street Hero, GEMA Designation, GACVB-Neil Brown Preservation Award, and Best of Hall.
- Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - Historic City Hall being used to leverage small trainings and meetings.
 - More opportunities available with community events.
 - New programs being initiated to include Quarterly Welcome Center Days and a Hotelier Ambassador Program.

- Arts & Entertainment (Downtown GVL)
 - First Friday on the Greenway event will occur on the first Friday in July.
 - The expansion of Jingle Mingle into Roosevelt Square and Crossroads Plaza was a great success as well as the Movie @ Midland and Santa Sprint.
 - Promoting music entertainment and US/GA 250 events.
- Gainesville Sports Alliance
 - The economic impact for FY2025 was \$33,737,099.
 - The NCAA Rowing National Championship is scheduled for May 2026.
 - Initiatives included partnerships with Brenau University and Gainesville High School.
- Lake Lanier Olympic Park
 - Food Truck Friday continues to grow.
 - A total of 162 events were held at the Boathouse.
 - Working with the Army Corp. on some improvements.
 - Improvements to be made to the Boathouse interior and parking lot as well as equipment upgrades.
 - Working to complete the trail system renewal which is the final phase of the 10 Year Master Plan.

Community & Economic Development

Community & Economic Development Director Rusty Ligon shared the accomplishments, challenges/opportunities, and initiatives of the department. Notable comments were as follows:

- A modernized ULDC (Unified Land Development Code) update was adopted. The update reduced Articles from 24 to 20 in addition to some policy updates.
- Inspections & Code Enforcement issued over 2,000 permits, performed approximately 9,900 building inspections, and addressed 3,700 code violations.
- Committed \$750,000 in CDBG funds to partner with GHA for new housing on Wall and Osborne Streets.
- Recognitions received included ULI-Development of Excellence in Public Realm, Downtown of the Year Award, and PlanFirst Designation.
- Redevelopment opportunities include the Gainesville Mill, Lakeshore Mall and vacant properties on Browns Bridge Road.
- An Atlanta Highway Corridor study is planned.
- Due for a 5-year minor update to the 2022 Comp. Plan.
- Marler St./G'ville Mill Village Project - Plans underway to begin houses on Marler Street by Fall of 2026.
- Acquisition of a Placer AI Software (a cloud-based analytic software tool for acquiring specific data) to share with other departments.

Public Works

Public Works Director Chris Rotalsky expressed appreciation to Council for coming to the Airport. He began his presentation by noting Public Works has eight (8) divisions. He shared the accomplishments, challenges/opportunities, and initiatives of the department categorized as Infrastructure and Transportation, Public Services, Internal Services, and Emergency Response. Notable comments were as follows:

- Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Gainesville is 5th in the state for based aircraft of 103 general aviation airports.
 - Received two significant recognition awards in 2026.

- Awarded a \$1.7 million grant for Terminal Area Apron Ph. III.
- Awarded a \$600,000 grant for Taxiway lighting.
- Approximately 5.75 miles of roadway was paved last year and approximately 9 miles of pavement this year.
- Intersection Improvements scheduled for Old Candler/SR 60 intersection, Millside Parkway/Clubside Drive.
- Pedestrian improvements include repairs to sidewalks, and install of speed tables and crosswalks.
- **Public Services**
 - Shared stats related to leaf pickup, litter pickup, and street sweeping.
 - Shared stats related to solid waste and recycling noting there are currently 7,900 customers and growing.
 - Received a Project of the Year Award for Historic Restoration for a cleanup/restoration project.
- **Internal Services**
 - In addition to project and management services, staff provides annual city special events support which is a significant investment made by the department.
- **Emergency Response**
 - Provides storm clean up, after hours incidents and winter weather responses.
- Daily trips through the main intersections referenced growth.
- The upgrade and modernization of the ITS control center will be beneficial in managing the system.
- Increase efficiency in emergency resilience with winter weather response to include increased workforce, vehicles and applications.
- Initiated a Public Works Training Program as part of a workforce investment.

City Manager Bryan Lackey closed by thanking staff for their presentations.

ADJOURNMENT: 1:05 PM

/ag

Zack Thompson, Mayor

Alisa Grayson, City Clerk