

**MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING
CITY OF KENNESAW
Council Chambers
(2529 J.O. Stephenson Avenue, Kennesaw, GA 30144)**

Livestream: <https://www.facebook.com/CityofKennesaw/>

July 8, 2024

7:00 PM

Present	Mayor Derek Easterling Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Jones Councilmember Madelyn Orochena Councilmember Tracey Viars Councilmember Pat Ferris Councilmember Anthony Gutierrez City Clerk Lea Alvarez City Manager Jeff Drobney
---------	---

1. Invocation

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Call to Order

Mayor Easterling called the meeting to order at 7:27 p.m.

4. Announcements

- A. If you are not able to attend a meeting in-person and would like to provide public comment on a specific agenda item, you can email kennesawcouncil@kennesaw-ga.gov no later than 6:00 PM the night of the regular meeting. Your comments on a specific agenda item will be read aloud or grouped into categories for the record. **Facebook Live is not monitored for public comment.**

5. Presentations

6. Public Comment/Business from the Floor

7. Old Business

8. New Business

A. Budget: FY 2024-2025

Draft Operating and Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

City Manager Jeff Drobney presented the Fiscal Year 2025 recommended budget to the Council for their consideration. The Fiscal Year 2025 proposed budget is

\$31,091,996, which is an approximate five percent increase from last year. Dr. Drobney provided some highlights regarding the budget, including the recommended millage rate remaining at 7.75 mills, a three percent recommended Cost of Living Adjustment for all staff, and \$1,096,870 to fund the City's reserve account. It was mentioned that there is a reduction of \$855,000 of General Fund revenue due House Bill 489. Fiscal Year 2025 projected benefits and health care costs decreased by approximately \$23,000 and retirement contributions increased by approximately \$24,000. Both costs are spread throughout each department.

Dr. Drobney reviewed all proposed budget assumptions, including all revenue and expenditure highlights. The 100% senior tax exemption is projected to total \$1,711,454 in dollars not being collected into the General Fund. Dr. Drobney provided some examples of what could be funded if the City were to receive those dollars. Some of the expenditure highlights include how the Court Project fund, Court Service Improvement fund, State and Local Fiscal Recovery funds, and Impact Fees will be used to cover various projects and needs.

Department Heads presented their operating budgets, highlights, any capital outlay items, and position summaries for their departments, respectively.

Councilmember Ferris stated he would like to see a millage rate rollback to give the citizens a much-needed break.

After the respective presentations, the Council asked Department Heads the following questions:

Councilmember Orochena noted that the travel budget for the Council does not cover the expenses for at least two conferences per Elected Official. City Clerk Lea Alvarez shared that some of the Council will not be able to attend conferences or travel, so she could work with those who cannot and share resources.

Councilmember Ferris asked Police Chief Westenberger to explain the Public Safety Ambassador positions. Chief Bill Westenberger shared these positions will provide services to the community without having to use patrol officers, such as transport. Mayor Pro Tem Jones asked about purchasing electric vehicles for the positions. Chief Westenberger said if they could find something at the same price as the vehicles they are currently requesting, he would not mind looking into it with the City Manager's office.

Councilmember Ferris asked Public Works Director Ricky Stewart if the built-in increases from Republic Services for sanitation are going to be passed along to the residents. Mr. Stewart stated that as of right now, the City is able to cover the increases with the current fee schedule. Councilmember Ferris asked if Mr. Stewart anticipated rate increases for customers in the next budget cycle. Mr. Stewart responded that the next fiscal year is still a year away, but that he expected to be discussing it with the City Manager next spring. Councilmember Ferris asked if the streetlight budget takes into

account adding new lights in different neighborhoods. Mr. Stewart shared that each budget is accumulating some surplus, and they are trying to collect enough to service a full neighborhood. He said it would be another several years before there is enough surplus to do so.

Councilmember Orochena told Parks and Recreation Director Bill McNair that she would like to prioritize creating a clearer vision for the Ben Robertson Community Center. Mayor Pro Tem Jones asked for a list of parks that need improvement. He would like to see fences around any parks near a busy road. Councilmember Ferris stated he would like to see the fireworks be increased to a 20-minute show, if possible.

Councilmember Orochena shared with Smith Gilbert Gardens Executive Director Dave Simpson that residents would like to see a residential credit or discount on admission to the gardens. Mr. Simpson stated the fee structure is approved by the Council and is aligned with the Southern Museum so that the entrance fees are the same. If the Council would like to adjust the fees, Mr. Simpson and Mr. Banz can work together to provide some recommendations.

Councilmember Orochena asked Finance Director Gina Auld what the approved uses were for the Opioid Settlement funds. Ms. Auld is still researching, but some of the uses could include Narcan or marketing campaigns, which will be done by the Kennesaw Police Department.

9. Committee and Board Reports

10. Public Hearing(s)

11. Consent Agenda

12. General and Administrative

13. Public Safety

14. Information Technology

15. Public Works and Building Maintenance

16. Recreation and Culture

17. Community Development

18. Public Comment/Business from the Floor

19. City Manager's Report

20. Mayor's Report

21. Council Reports & Discussions

22. Executive Session

Pursuant to the provisions of O.C.G.A 50-14-3, the City Council could, at any time during the meeting, vote to close the public meeting and move to executive session to discuss matters relating to litigation, legal actions and/or communications from the City Attorney; and/or personnel matters; and/or real estate matters.

23. Adjourn

Mayor Easterling adjourned the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

Lea Alvarez, City Clerk