

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

**Livestream: www.kennesaw-ga.gov/publicmeetings/
November 25, 2024
6:30 PM**

Present

Mayor Derek Easterling
Councilmember Madelyn Orochena
Councilmember Tracey Viars
Councilmember Pat Ferris
City Clerk Lea Alvarez
City Manager Jeff Drobney
City Attorney Randall Bentley, Sr.

Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Jones arrived at 7:05 p.m.
Councilmember Anthony Gutierrez participated virtually via Zoom

1. Invocation

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Call to Order

Mayor Easterling called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

4. Announcements

5. Presentations

A. Update: Taste of Kennesaw

Update on the Taste of Kennesaw to be provided by Mike Everhart of the Kennesaw Business Association at the December 2, 2024, regular meeting.

The update will be provided at the December 2, 2024, regular meeting.

B. Discussion: Bond Funding for Dale Hughes' Main Street Projects

Presentation on potential bond financing for Dale Hughes' Main Street projects from Raymond James, the City of Kennesaw's financial advisor.

Gordon Mortin, Managing Director of Raymond James, provided a synopsis of the proposed financing program for the Main Street project presented by Dale Hughes at the last work session. Mr. Mortin is proposing that the Kennesaw Downtown Development Authority (KDDA) issue \$7.5 million in taxable revenue bonds. He discussed further details about the proposal, including requirements for Mr. Hughes,

having the property titled to the KDDA, and that it will be a 20-year bond issue.

6. Old Business

7. New Business

8. Committee and Board Reports

A. Update: Kennesaw City Cemetery

Year in Review to be provided by Lewis Bramlett, Chair of the Cemetery Preservation Commission, at the December 2, 2024, regular City Council meeting.

The update will be provided at the December 2, 2024, regular meeting.

9. Public Hearing(s)

10. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes: November 12, 2024 Executive Session

Approval of the November 12, 2024, City Council executive session minutes.

B. Minutes: November 12, 2024 Work Session

Approval of the November 12, 2024, City Council work session minutes.

C. Minutes: November 18, 2024 Regular Meeting

Approval of the November 18, 2024, City Council regular meeting minutes.

11. General and Administrative

A. Discussion: House Bill (HB) 581 Local Opt-out Floating Homestead Exemption

Discussion of HB 581 Local Opt-out Floating Homestead Exemption, which contains multiple provisions related to property tax.

Assistant Finance Director Jennifer Gordy explained House Bill 581 Local Opt-out Floating Homestead Exemption, which contains multiple provisions related to property tax. Ms. Gordy noted that the bill was approved by voters in the November 2024 general election. This bill aims to change how property taxes are calculated and managed in Georgia. It grants a statewide homestead exemption that limits the taxable value of homes to no more than the inflation rate. Ms. Gordy explained that currently, in the City of Kennesaw, there is a floating homestead exemption that is referred to as a frozen floating homestead exemption. Since we already have a frozen floating homestead exemption in place, which is a better option since the taxable value will never increase, staff is recommending that the City opt out of the HB 581 Floating Homestead Exemption since it will not offer any relief to the taxpayers. Ms. Gordy emphasized that the exemption is only eligible for homestead properties, not for any rental or commercial properties.

City Manager Jeff Drobney provided some context to House Bill 581. The bill was on

the most recent ballot, and it came about because the legislature had received complaints regarding the rapid increase of property values, which was increasing the amount of property tax people were having to pay. This legislation was not aimed at Kennesaw or Cobb County, because we have a frozen homestead exemption. Instead, the intent was to create parameters which would relieve the burden of rapid increases in the amount of property taxes people were paying, especially for those cities and counties that did not have a homestead exemption. For Kennesaw, opting in would provide no benefit. Dr. Drobney pointed out that in the legislation, it says that if there is a better homestead exemption already in place, it takes precedence. There is one opportunity to opt-out, and it must be done by March 1, 2025. Dr. Drobney stated we could begin the opting out process in January 2025.

12. Public Safety

A. Discussion: Public Safety Facility

Update and discussion of funding for Public Safety Facility.

Dr. Drobney shared the City is at a point where some decisions have to be made regarding the funding for the Public Safety Facility. The City began planning for a Public Safety Facility going back to 2017 to be funded through SPLOST, which was adopted in 2020 and went into effect in 2022. Under that SPLOST funding, approximately \$8.7 million was committed to the Public Safety Facility, which was using building costs from 2018. Dr. Drobney said staff are trying to design a building to grow with the police department. The cost of the building has come back and is \$15.2 million, which is a difference of about \$6.5 million.

Dr. Drobney proposed a solution stating that the City has been collecting SPLOST proceeds over the last 33 months. The City was projected to collect approximately \$441,458 per month, which is a total collection projection of \$31,785,000. To date, we have collected \$25,421,908. So, in 33 months, we are 79% of the way there. Dr. Drobney stated we still had 39 months left to go. On average, the City has been collecting an additional \$328,902.84 per month over. Right now, we have taken those additional payments and set them to the side, which totals \$10,853,794.48 in excess collections. Dr. Drobney's recommendation is to use a portion of that overage to fund the additional \$6.5 million for the Public Safety Facility to allow for construction, emphasizing that the more we delay, the more the cost goes up.

[Mayor Pro Tem Jones arrived at 7:05 p.m.].

The Mayor and Council directed Dr. Drobney to put the item on the agenda for the regular meeting.

13. Information Technology

14. Public Works and Building Maintenance

A. Resolution: Right of Way Abandonment Process for 2995 and 2997 North Main Street

Consideration of approval for a Resolution authorizing the start of the Right of Way Abandonment Process for 2995 and 2997 North Main Street.

[Councilmember Orochena announced that she would recuse herself from any discussion or vote on 2995 and 2997 North Main Street as those properties are owned by her parents].

Public Works Director Ricky Stewart received a request from the property owner of 2995 and 2997 North Main Street for the City to entertain abandoning a portion of right of way in front of the two lots. Currently, the right of way in front of those two lots is 100 feet, 50 feet on either side of the centerline. Those two parcels are the only on that street that has right of way with that depth to it. From what Mr. Stewart could tell from plat research, 2985 North Main Street, which adjoins 2995 North Main Street, also had the same right of way that depth. In the early 2000s, the city did a land swap with 2985 North Main Street to gain some additional property for Adams Park. In exchange, a portion of the right of way was brought closer to the street side. Further, it appears the right of way for those three parcels was for some sort of turn lane for "Pine Street," which was an old right of way that separated 2985 North Main Street and 2995 North Main Street and was abandoned in the 1990s. He doesn't see an issue with abandoning the extra right of way as requested. Mr. Stewart said, ultimately, of the 50 feet, the City would abandon 30 feet of it to bring that side to 20 feet, matching the property at 2985 North Main Street.

Mr. Stewart recommended approval to start the abandonment process. It is a multistep process per state law.

Councilmember Ferris asked if the City was going to retain enough property for utilities and streetlights. Mr. Stewart stated that reducing 50 feet back to 20 feet would keep the sidewalk. Mr. Stewart clarified that in the abandonment, the City would have to make the property owner aware that any possible utility on the right of way would require an easement on that property. The only utilities Mr. Stewart was aware of were power and streetlights. If there are any unknown utilities that are underground, they would have to become an easement.

The Mayor stated the item would remain where it is on the agenda.

B. Resolution: City Hall Entrance Improvements

Consideration of approval for a Resolution approving the bid and awarding the contract for City Hall Entrance Improvements to S.H. Creel Contracting, LLC.

Mr. Stewart presented a resolution approving the bid and awarding the contract for City Hall Entrance Improvements to S.H. Creel Contracting, LLC. Mr. Stewart shared that when the City did the Dallas-Watts project in 2016, which included re-working the back of City Hall, discussions began regarding refreshing the front of City Hall. The City received three bids with S.H. Creel Contracting, LLC being the lowest bid of \$154,801.50. Mr. Stewart's recommendation was to approve the bid and award the contract to S.H. Creel Contracting, LLC to begin the work in front of City Hall.

Mayor Pro Tem Jones asked about the particulars of the project. Mr. Stewart shared the improvements include revamping the ADA parking lot, removing trees, removing and replacing the sidewalks, and improving the landscaping.

After receiving confirmation from the Council, Mayor Easterling suggested moving the item to the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

15. Recreation and Culture

16. Community Development

17. Public Comments

7:16 p.m. Floor Open for Public Comments

No comments

7:17 p.m. Floor Closed for Public Comments

18. City Manager's Report

A. Reports, Discussions, and Updates

Dr. Drobney wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

19. Mayor's Report

A. Mayor and Council (re)appointments to Boards and Commissions. This item is for (re)appointments made by the Mayor to any Board, Committee, Authority, or Commission requiring an appointment to fill any vacancies, resignations, and to create or dissolve boards and commissions, as deemed necessary.

20. Council Reports & Discussions

Councilmember Gutierrez apologized for being absent for this meeting as he has a new job that required some travel. In the spirit of giving back to the community, he is fortunate enough to be more charitable this season and encouraged everyone to do the same and help those in need during this Christmas season.

Mayor Pro Tem Jones apologized for being late today as he was coming home from Florida.

Councilmember Ferris shared that he was in short sleeves tonight, which might be the last time he will be for many weeks. He is ready for spring!

Councilmember Orochena noted she is thankful for her family getting together for Thanksgiving this year.

Councilmember Viars wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. She mentioned there are always people who do not have anyone to spend this holiday with, so she

encouraged everyone make an extra plate and invite someone over.

21. 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.

Motion by Councilmember Orochena to enter into Executive Session as allowed by O.C.G.A § 50-14-3 for the purpose of discussing personnel. Motion seconded by Councilmember Viars.

Vote taken, motion unanimously approved 5-0. Motion passed.

7:20 p.m. Recess to Executive Session

The Mayor, City Council, and City Attorney attended the Executive Session.

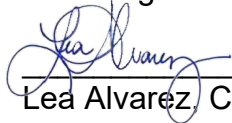
7:33 p.m. Reconvene to Open Session

Councilmember Orochena read the Council back into Open Session and directed the Mayor and City Council to execute an affidavit in compliance with O.C.G.A § 50-14-4. Motion seconded by Councilmember Viars.

Vote taken, motion unanimously approved 5-0. Motion passed.

22. Adjourn

Mayor Easterling adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m. The regular meeting will be held on Monday, December 2, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The public is encouraged to attend.



Lea Alvarez, City Clerk

Names and Addresses will be disclosed in the Permanent Minutes of the
City of Kennesaw

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR NAME IS LEGIBLE AND CLEAR

City Council Work Session

11/25/2024

Public Comment Sign-in

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