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/
September 8, 2025
6:30 PM

Present	Mayor Derek Easterling Mayor Pro Tem Pat Ferris Councilmember Madelyn Orochena Councilmember Tracey Viars Councilmember Antonio Jones Councilmember Anthony Gutierrez City Clerk Lea Alvarez City Manager Jeff Drobney City Attorney Sam Hensley, Jr.

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

6. Old Business

7. New Business

A. **Resolution: GMA Certified City of Ethics**
Consideration for approval of a Resolution to re-certify the City of Ethics program through the Georgia Municipal Association.

City Clerk Lea Alvarez presented a resolution for re-certification in the Georgia Municipal Association's City of Ethics program. Kennesaw, a certified City of Ethics for the past 25 years, is required to re-certify every four years; the last certification was in 2021.

With Council consensus, Mayor Easterling recommended placing the item on the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting

B. **Discussion Only: Work Session Microphones**

Ms. Alvarez noted that in 2024 the City upgraded its audio/visual (A/V) systems, greatly improving the public meeting experience. However, staff has received audience complaints about difficulty hearing the Council during work sessions. Forte, the City's A/V vendor, has proposed a solution to address this issue at a cost of $12,062.10.

With Council consensus, Mayor Easterling recommended placing the item on the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

C. **Discussion Only: 2028 SPLOST**

Assistant City Manager Marty Hughes presented the draft list of 2028 SPLOST projects. He noted that the internal SPLOST committee had to make certain assumptions while awaiting Cobb County's final apportionment for Kennesaw. Once that figure is received, the project list will be adjusted and forwarded to the City Manager and City Council for final review and approval.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferris expressed concern that limited funding was allocated to road projects. He questioned the need for a new City Hall, noting that much of the building would be vacant following the construction of the Public Safety Facility. Mr. Hughes responded that, from an engineering standpoint, the current City Hall has exceeded its life expectancy. He clarified that the project is categorized as Tier II, reflecting its lower priority. Mayor Pro Tem Ferris requested an assessment of the building's condition and emphasized his preference to direct more funding toward streets.

Councilmember Jones concurred with Mayor Pro Tem Ferris and stated he would like to see additional funding dedicated to stormwater improvements.

Councilmember Orochena added that similar concerns were raised during committee discussions, which led to the new City Hall being placed in the Tier II category.

8. Committee and Board Reports

A. **Road Closures: Medal of Honor Convention**
Approval of road closures for the 2025 Medal of Honor Convention and re-enactment of The Great Locomotive Chase on September 30, 2025.

Mr. Hughes presented the planned road closures for the 2025 Medal of Honor Convention and the re-enactment of The Great Locomotive Chase. The event is scheduled from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with road closures beginning at 8:00 a.m. and reopening at 1:30 p.m. Cherokee Street will be closed in front of the Museum from Main Street to Shirley Drive/Big Shanty Drive. In addition, CSX will close the tracks to allow guests to board a train that will follow the historic chase route.

With Council consensus, Mayor Easterling recommended placing the item on the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

9. Public Hearing(s)

A. **Final Public Hearing: FY 26 Operating Budget**
Consideration to approve a Resolution adopting the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Operating Budget for the City of Kennesaw.

Finance Director Jennifer Gordy announced that she will present the City of Kennesaw's Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget at the regular meeting on Monday, September 15, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

B. **Final Public Hearing: FY 26 Capital Improvement (SPLOST) Budget**
Consideration to approve a Resolution adopting the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Capital Improvement (SPLOST) Budget for the City of Kennesaw.

Ms. Gordy stated that she will present a separate review of the City of Kennesaw's Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Improvement (SPLOST) Budget at the regular meeting on Monday, September 15, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

C. **Land Use Permit: 3409 English Oaks Drive**
Consideration for approval of a Land Use Permit application for the property located at 3409 English Oaks Drive as submitted by applicant Dahlia Akar. Case #LU2025-05

Assistant Zoning Administrator and Planner Chanelle Campbell presented a Land Use Permit application for the property at 3409 English Oaks Drive, submitted by Dahlia Akar. The applicant is requesting a home occupation business license to operate a home bakery. Staff recommends approval, subject to the standard conditions typically associated with such permits.

D. **Zoning Variance: 2292 Bayswater Drive**
Consideration for approval of a variance application for the property located at 2292 Bayswater Drive as submitted by Alberto Florido. Case #ZV2025-02

Ms. Campbell presented a variance application for the property at 2292 Bayswater Drive, submitted by Albert Florido. The applicant is requesting relief from Code of Ordinances Section 2.01.03.04(D) of the Unified Development Code to allow a 14-foot encroachment into the required 30-foot rear setback for the reconstruction of a previously existing deck and balcony.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferris noted that the rear deck was likely built at the same time as the house and questioned why it was not being grandfathered. Ms. Campbell explained that because Mr. Florido has fully removed the deck, the structure is no longer considered non-conforming.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferris emphasized that the motion at the regular meeting should specify that the variance applies solely to the deck.

E. **Ordinance: Text Amendment**
Consideration for approval of a text amendment as submitted by the City of Kennesaw to amend the Unified Development Code, Appendix A "Unified Development Code" Chapter 1 Section 1.09.02, Chapter 2 Section 2.01.03 and Chapter 2 Section 2.02.03. Case #MISC2025-06

Ms. Campbell presented a text amendment submitted by the City of Kennesaw to update the Unified Development Code, including Appendix A, Chapter 1, Section

1.09.02; Chapter 2, Section 2.01.03; and Chapter 2, Section 2.02.03. Staff will revise code sections related to definitions, permitted use tables, and residential zoning districts to align with City Council actions regarding Short-Term Rentals.

10. Consent Agenda

A. **Minutes: August 25, 2025 Work Session**
Approval of the August 25, 2025, City Council work session minutes.

B. **Minutes: August 25, 2025 Executive Session**
Approval of the August 25, 2025, City Council executive session minutes.

C. **Minutes: September 2, 2025 Regular Meeting**
Approval of the September 2, 2025, City Council regular meeting.

11. General and Administrative

A. **Alcohol License: Main Street Burger, Inc.**
Consideration for approval of a Retail Pouring Alcohol License for Liquor and Sunday Sales for Main Street Burger, Inc. d/b/a Main Street Eats located at 2844 South Main Street, Kennesaw, GA 30144. Applicant: Michael Diamond

Business License Manager Mariyah Nall presented a Retail Pouring Alcohol License for Liquor and Sunday Sales for Main Street Burger, Inc. d/b/a Main Street Eats located at 2844 South Main Street, submitted by Michael Diamond. The applicant has completed the required workshop in accordance with Code of Ordinance Section 6-69. Signs have been posted, and the application has been properly advertised as required by Section 6-36. The current application and background check results are on file.

Pursuant to Sec. 6-42, alcohol licenses may not be issued for locations within 600 feet of a public building or public park. A distance survey conducted by a certified surveyor confirms that the business is within 600 feet of both. However, Sec. 6-42 also provides that the Mayor and Council may waive this distance requirement if they determine that the quiet enjoyment of the premises by residents will not be adversely affected, and that granting the license will not negatively impact nearby private residences.

With Council consensus, Mayor Easterling recommended placing the item on the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

B. **Resolution: Master Fee Schedule Updates**
Consideration for approval of a Resolution updating various portions of the Master Fee Schedule.

Ms. Alvarez presented a resolution updating various portions of the Master Fee Schedule as follows:

- Building Services: Multi-Family trade permit fees were changed from a per-building permit to a per-unit basis. A Plan Review fee was added for commercial projects only, Revisions fees were amended for both residential and commercial permits, and a Short-Term Rental inspection permit fee was added.

- Business License: New fees were added for Administration, Short-Term Rental applications, Temporary Use applications, and Mobile Food Vending applications. Additionally, fees and information for Business License Rush Process, Bail Bonds applications, Insurance or License Agent fees, Soliciting Permits, Fundraising Counsel or Professional Solicitor fees, Yard Sale Permits, Massage Therapist Licenses, and Pawn Broker Licenses were transferred from General & Administrative to Business License.

- Cemetery Preservation Commission: The fee associated with Memorial Tree Plaques was removed.

- General & Administrative: Sanitation rates were increased.

- Parks and Recreation: Rates were increased for Recreation Center memberships and for rentals of various facilities, including the Community Center Banquet Hall, Conference Room, Large Meeting Room, Craft Lab, Painting Lab, Fitness Room, Dance Rooms, Outdoor Classroom at Depot Park, Outdoor Pickleball Court, Park Pavilions, Recreation Center Fitness Rooms, Splash Pad, and Tennis Court for groups. The fee for Special Event permits was removed.

- Police: Verbiage regarding the Department providing a card for fingerprinting was removed, as well as the associated fee for fingerprinting when the card is provided by the requestor.

- Public Works: A $3.00 per page fee was added for site plan copies.

- Smith-Gilbert Gardens: A time frame was added for Off-Site Presentations/Workshops for Adult Groups, along with fees for On-Site Presentations/Workshops and Private Group Volunteer projects.

With Council consensus, Mayor Easterling recommended placing the item on the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

12. Public Safety

A. **Surplus: Police Department Radios**
Consideration to approve the surplus of select Kennesaw Police Department Motorola radios.

Kennesaw Police Department Lieutenant Joshua Irwin requested the surplus of outgoing Motorola radios. In 2023, the Department updated its radio systems, leaving 68 portable radios and 72 in-car radios that retain some value on the open market.

With Council consensus, Mayor Easterling recommended placing the item on the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

13. Information Technology

14. Public Works and Building Maintenance

A. **Resolution: Engineering Design Services for Cherokee Street Improvements**
Consideration for approval of a Resolution accepting Patterson & Dewar Engineers' proposal for Engineering Design Services for Cherokee Street Improvements.

Public Works Director Ricky Stewart presented a resolution to accept Patterson & Dewar Engineers' proposal for Engineering Design Services for Cherokee Street Improvements. The proposal includes updating the survey from the original Croy Engineering survey to reflect current conditions, revising the construction plans, developing traffic plans, and assisting with the bidding process.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferris requested a review of the original plans for Cherokee Street and Ben King. City Manager Jeff Drobney stated that staff will coordinate a time to revisit the original plans.

The item will remain where it is on the agenda for the regular meeting.

B. **Resolution: Engineering Design Services for Ben King Road Improvements**
Consideration for approval of a Resolution accepting Patterson & Dewar Engineers' proposal for Engineering Design Services for Ben King Road Improvements.

Public Works Director Ricky Stewart presented a resolution to accept Patterson & Dewar Engineers' proposal for Engineering Design Services for Ben King Road Improvements. The proposal includes updating the survey from the original Croy Engineering survey to reflect current conditions, revising the construction plans, developing traffic plans, and assisting with the project bidding process.

The item will remain where it is on the agenda for the regular meeting.

15. Recreation and Culture

16. Community Development

17. Public Comments

6:57 p.m. Floor Open for Public Comments

No comments.

6:58 p.m. Floor Closed for Public Comments

18. City Manager's Report

A. Reports, Discussions, and Updates

Dr. Drobney did not have anything to report.

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

A. **Discussion: Historic Preservation Commission**
Discussion item requested by Mayor Pro Tem Ferris regarding the Historic Preservation Commission and the associated ordinances.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferris expressed interest in revisiting some of the historic preservation standards and processes to provide relief to homeowners and developers. He noted that the time and expenses required to meet these standards may discourage investment in downtown properties.

Councilmember Viars agreed, citing conflicts between the historic preservation standards and Central Business District (CBD) regulations. She shared that, as a real estate professional, potential buyers often back out when they learn a property is subject to Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) guidelines.

Mr. Simmons explained that the HPC’s primary focus is on architecture and exterior design standards. Many complex issues, such as fire marshal requirements, stormwater, and utilities, are outside the HPC’s control. Staff is addressing conflicts between HPC and CBD standards and hired a consultant to redline needed changes earlier this year. These revisions will undergo legal review and review by the Department of Community Affairs. To maintain certified local government status, certain historic preservation guidelines must be met. Staff is also exploring ways to expedite the process and enhance the HPC’s administrative authority.

Councilmember Orochena, a historic district homeowner, noted that residents tend to fall into two groups: those who want to eliminate the historic district entirely, and those who wish to preserve it but support significant changes. She emphasized the need to balance historic preservation with flexibility for businesses and families, suggesting future input meetings or townhalls targeted specifically at property owners in the historic district.

Mr. Simmons asked Councilmember Orochena to share residents’ major concerns to assist staff in rewriting the code and re-districting downtown to exclude areas that should not be in the historic district.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferris reiterated the importance of simplifying processes and reducing regulatory burdens.

Mr. Simmons proposed a Historic Preservation Commission rescue fund, providing one-time grants to help owners maintain historic structures and prevent deterioration.

Councilmember Orochena inquired about future input meetings. Mr. Simmons stated that meetings will occur, but staff needs time to complete additional data collection and analysis before presenting recommendations to the City Council and community.

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.

22. Adjourn

Mayor Easterling adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m. The regular meeting will be held on Monday, September 15, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The public is encouraged to attend.

Lea Alvarez

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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
9/8/2025
Public Comment Sign-in

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