

**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/
April 27, 2026
6:30 PM**

Present	Mayor Derek Easterling Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Jones Councilmember Madelyn Orochena Councilmember Tracey Viars Councilmember Anthony Gutierrez-Leon Deputy City Clerk Nicholas Simpson City Manager Jeff Drobney City Attorney Sam Hensley, Jr.
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1. Invocation

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Call to Order

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

4. Announcements

5. Presentations

A. Update: Cobb Galleria Expansion Project

CEO Charles Beirne, COO Jeff Turner, and Marketing & Communications Director Karen Caro of the Cobb Marietta Coliseum & Exhibit Hall Authority delivered a presentation on the Cobb Galleria Expansion project.

6. Old Business

7. New Business

8. Committee and Board Reports

9. Public Hearing(s)

A. Ordinance: Rezoning Request for 1600 Old 41 Hwy & 0 Old 41 Hwy

Consideration for approval of an ordinance authorizing a rezoning request submitted by Walton Communities, LLC for the properties located at 1600 Old 41 Hwy and 0 Old 41 Hwy (Parcel #20021200130 & 2002120156). Case #RZ2026-01

Planning Director Chanelle Campbell presented an ordinance authorizing a rezoning request submitted by Walton Communities, LLC for the properties located at 1600 Old 41 Hwy and 0 Old 41 Hwy. Said requests to rezone 1600 Old 41 Hwy (parcel # 20021200130) and 0 Old 41 Hwy (parcel #20021201560) from General Commercial (GC) and RM-12, Multifamily residential respectively to RM-16, Multifamily residential for the development of a multifamily community.

The parcel consists of 11.44+/- acres and lies in Land Lot 212 and Tax Parcels 13 & 156. The public hearing was advertised in the Marietta Daily Journal on January 16, 2026 and public notice signs posted on site on January 16, 2026 and updated February 17, 2026. At the March 4, 2026 meeting, the Planning Commission recommended approval with conditions as outlined by staff.

During the March 9, 2026 and March 16, 2026 scheduled Mayor and Council meetings, the applicant requested the application be deferred to allow for continued discussion with staff. On April 15, 2026, the applicant submitted a request to withdraw the application without prejudice.

Planning and Zoning recommends approval to withdraw the application without prejudice.

B. Zoning Variance: 1600 Old 41 Hwy & 0 Old 41 Hwy

Consideration for approval of a variance application for the properties located at 1600 Old 41 Hwy and 0 Old 41 Hwy (Parcel #20021200130 & 20021201560) as submitted by Walton Communities, LLC. Case #ZV2026-01

Planning Director Chanelle Campbell presented a zoning variance application for the properties located at 1600 Old 41 Hwy and 0 Old 41 Hwy (Parcel #20021200130 & 20021201560) as submitted by Walton Communities, LLC. Said request is to vary from the parking requirement as outlined in section 6.06.09 that requires 1.75 parking spaces per unit to 1.5 parking spaces per unit. Parcel contains 11.44 +/- acres, lies in Land Lot 212, Tax Parcel 13 & 156. This public hearing was advertised in the Marietta Daily Journal on February 13, 2026, and a public notice has been posted onsite.

At their March 4, 2026 meeting, Planning Commission recommended approval of the variance request. During the March 9, 2026 and March 16, 2026 scheduled Mayor and Council meetings, the applicant requested the application be deferred to allow for continued discussion with staff. On April 15, 2026, the applicant submitted a request to withdraw the application without prejudice.

Planning and Zoning recommends approval of the request to withdraw the application without prejudice.

C. Resolution: 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Short Term Work Program

Consideration for approval of a Resolution to submit the transmittal of updates to the Capital Improvement Element and Short Term Work Program (CIE/STWP) covering the five-year period of 2026-2030. Case #MISC2026-05

Planning Director Chanelle Campbell presented a Resolution to submit the transmittal

of updates to the Capital Improvement Element and Short Term Work Program (CIE/STWP) covering the five-year period of 2026-2030.

Planning and Zoning recommends approval.

10. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes: April 13, 2026 Work Session

Approval of the April 13, 2026, City Council work session minutes.

B. Minutes: April 20, 2026 Regular Meeting

Approval of the April 20, 2026, City Council regular meeting minutes.

C. Minutes: April 20, 2026 Executive Session

Approval of the April 20, 2026, City Council executive session minutes.

11. General and Administrative

A. Audit Report: Fiscal Year ended September 30, 2025

Consideration to accept the Audit Report for Fiscal Year ended September 30, 2025, for the City of Kennesaw as presented by Mauldin and Jenkins, LLC.

Finance Director Jennifer Gordy discussed the audit report that is presented to the Mayor and Council each year. The audit report is for the Fiscal Year ended September 30, 2025, as presented by Mauldin and Jenkins, LLC. A representative from Mauldin and Jenkins will deliver a presentation on the audit at next week's regular meeting.

12. Public Safety

13. Information Technology

14. Public Works and Building Maintenance

A. Resolution: Hiram Butler House Rehabilitation Project

Consideration for approval of a Resolution accepting a proposal for professional services for the Hiram Butler House Rehabilitation project.

Building & Facilities Director Robbie Balenger presented a Resolution accepting a proposal for professional services for the Hiram Butler House Rehabilitation project.

The proposal for professional services includes the preparation of construction documents, procurement assistance, and construction administration for the rehabilitation of the Hiram Butler House at the Smith Gilbert Gardens. This is a continuation of the project with Patterson & Dewar. The cost of the services is \$63,160.

The Building and Facilities Director recommends approval of this proposal.

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

15. Recreation and Culture

16. Community Development

A. Final Plat Application: 0 Maple Drive

Consideration for approval of the final plat application submitted by Daniel Gonzalez for 0 Maple Drive (Parcel #20010002870); this plat subdivides the existing 1.78+/- acre lot into three parcels for the construction of three single-family detached dwelling units. Case #PS2025-03

Planning Director Chanelle Campbell presented a final plat application submitted by Daniel Gonzalez for 0 Maple Drive (Parcel #20010002870); this plat subdivides the existing 1.78+/- acre lot into three parcels for the construction of three single-family detached dwelling units. The application was submitted by Daniel Gonzales to subdivide a single lot consisting of 1.78+/- acres into three (3) tracts for the development of three single family dwelling units. The Plan Review Committee has reviewed the final plat and deemed the plat is in compliance and recommends approval.

Planning and Zoning recommends approval of the final plat.

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

B. Final Plat Application: 2615 South Main Street & 2681 South Main Street

Consideration for approval of a final plat application submitted by Kennesaw Development Owner, LLC for 2615 S. Main St and 2681 S. Main St (Parcel # 20016700990 & 20016700140). Case #FP2025-03

Planning Director Chanelle Campbell presented a final plat application submitted by Kennesaw Development Owner, LLC for 2615 S. Main St and 2681 S. Main St (Parcel # 20016700990 & 20016700140). The application was submitted by Kennesaw Development Owner, LLC, for 2615 S. Main Street and 2681 S. Main Street. The plat will revise the existing property lines for the mixed-use development consisting of a multifamily development, commercial and an outparcel retail. The Plan Review Committee has reviewed the final plat and deemed the plat is in compliance and recommends approval.

Planning and Zoning recommends approval of the final plat.

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

C. Central Business District: 2250 Lewis Street

Consideration to review a CBD Project application request for the construction of a parking lot on the parcel located at 2250 Lewis Street (Parcel #20013801620). Case #CBD2026-01

Planning Director Chanelle Campbell presented a CBD Project application request for the construction of a parking lot on the parcel located at 2250 Lewis Street (Parcel #20013801620). The applicant went before the Kennesaw Downtown Development

Authority (KDDA) on April 10, 2026, where the application was unanimously approved. On April 17, 2026, the application went before the Historic Preservation Commission where it was unanimously approved with conditions.

Planning and Zoning recommends approval of the CBD project application.

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

17. Public Comments

6:53 p.m. - Floor Open for Public Comments

Mary Miller {City Resident}: Ms. Miller commented on her parents' passion for and support of native plants and pollinator gardens in Rockville, Maryland. As a result of their efforts, the City of Rockville was designated as a certified wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. Rockville was required to have a minimum number of pollinator gardens within the city to achieve and maintain certification. Miller further commented that due to the collapse in insect populations, and subsequently, the bird population, the importance of pollinator gardens cannot be understated. Without pollinators, which are mostly insects, food crops cannot survive, and without food, neither can humans.

Jeanne Young {City Resident}: Ms. Young is currently the Vice President of the North Metro Atlanta Chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society (GNPS). The GNPS is partnering with Smith-Gilbert Gardens to remove nonnative invasive plants and restore the habitat for the Gardens, and work to stimulate Woodland Garden to support pollinators, bees, etc. GNPS has a number of volunteers in the Kennesaw area that would support any pollinator garden projects in the city.

Steven Luitjens {City Resident}: Mr. Luitjens is the owner of Conservation Landscaping LLC, a Kennesaw-based company dedicated to restoring habitat and biodiversity through responsible, functional landscaping practices. He commented on the financial and practical aspects of starting pollinator gardens. Small traditionally landscaped areas with turf or nonnative material can carry ongoing costs such as mowing, trimming, mulching, applying fertilizer and pesticides, and irrigation. These aspects of maintenance can cost several thousand dollars. Initial pocket pollinator garden costs can total several thousand dollars but can cost only hundreds of dollars per year to maintain. While they require initial establishment watering and protection from invasives, they do not require constant mowing or replanting. Native plants can thrive without chemical inputs, thereby maintaining chemical-free public spaces for families and children. Mr. Luitjens offered to be a pollinator garden resource for the city, if needed.

Samuel Rusch {City Resident}: Prior to Mr. Rusch delivering his testimony, Mayor Derek Easterling referenced his past comments to the Council, and exhorted him to be mindful of his tone while addressing the Council during public comment. Mr. Rusch

began by stating that he has seen a lot of progress with Woodland Park and the "park formerly known" as Butler Creek Park since he addressed the Council two weeks ago, but not nearly enough. He submitted seeclckfix.com tickets for Woodland Park and "now" Pine Mountain Park on April 9th and only half of the signs he requested have been installed. Rusch spoke with former Kennnesaw Parks and Recreation Director Steve Roberts about Woodland Park and the "park formerly known" as Butler Creek Park. Roberts advised Rusch that he attempted to utilize impact fees to improve the parks, but he received push back from city officials. Rusch further stated that Roberts told him that before he joined the city parks department, there was a problem with drug activity and vandalism in the parks. According to Rusch, Roberts sought to turn Woodland Park into a dog park and install a playground, but that effort was shut down. The wooden benches in Butler Creek Park were added by a boy scout troop during Roberts' tenure, but further improvements were quickly shut down. Rusch believes that the current departmental leadership and the Mayor are the reason for the lack of investment in Woodland Park and the "park formerly known" as Butler Creek Park. Rusch recounted the background on the development of the parks. According to Rusch, on October 7, 1996, city resident John Davis, owner of Woodland Park, advised the city that he was unable to develop the park due to issues with the EPA designating the area a wetland. Rusch further states that, according to archived city meeting minutes, then-Mayor John Haynie believed that the topography was an issue. Rusch further stated that an individual named "Vick True" requested that the basketball court in Woodland Acres Park be removed because the older children destroy the park and younger children cannot play there. According to Rusch, "True" requested that a playground be installed. Rusch noted the immense changes in the City of Kennesaw over the past 30 years. He closed by asking the Council to "please, bring back these parks."

Bruno Castellanos {City Resident}: Mr. Castellanos commented on the benefits of multiple community pollinator gardens in the city. Pollinator gardens offer a peacefulness that is great for people who are crowd-averse or have social restrictions. He believes that native habitats benefit the city's youth because they lead to curiosity and education. He further believes in the generational benefits of community gardens for the future of Kennesaw. Castellanos commented that community native gardens in downtown Kennesaw should not be overlooked but championed. He resides in Brookwood Commons where the HOA President is working to create native habitats for the housing development, and her efforts have attracted children exploring native habitats in the community.

7:04 p.m. - Floor Closed for Public Comments

18. City Manager's Report

Kennesaw City Manager Dr. Jeff Drobney announced the First Friday concert series on Friday, May 1st, and on Saturday, May 2nd, the Kennesaw concert series featuring boy bands. Drobney also mentioned his attendance at the kickoff meeting for the Kennesaw Comprehensive Plan earlier in the day. He explained that the Council will

participate in stakeholder interviews, which will help guide the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan will take over a year to complete, and will be adopted by Spring 2027.

Dr. Drobney mentioned the land use projects that are currently underway: LCI, the construction of the Public Safety Building and Chalker Park.

A. Reports, Discussions, and Updates

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: Community-Driven Pocket Pollinator Garden

Discussion item as requested by Councilmember Orochena to discuss the potential for a "community-driven pocket pollinator garden" within the city.

Council member Madelyn Orochena initiated the discussion about the creation of a community-driven pollinator garden. Her stated goal is to provide a simple, low-cost opportunity that brings environmental, educational, and community building benefits to the city. Orochena will lead the pilot project, coordinate the donation of plant materials, and recruit volunteers to assist in growing the garden. She is seeking permission to start a pilot program, and clarity on what city resources may be available, i.e., staff, signage. Orochena believes the project could grow over time if successful.

Council member Jonathon Bothers asked Orochena where the garden would be located, what are the costs associated with maintenance, and how many gardens are being proposed.

Council member Orochena responded that her chosen site is a planter box located at 2847 S. Main Street along J.O. Stephenson Avenue. Currently, there are annuals planted there. She thinks her chosen location is small and manageable. She further commented that there would be no risk of over spray. She feels the project will be motivating and inspiring for many in the community.

Council member Anthony Gutierrez-Leon supports Orochena's pollinator garden pilot project. He noted that, although he would not want to participate as a volunteer, there are at least 4 city residents in the chamber that have spoken in support of the pollinator garden and could be recruited to participate. Gutierrez-Leon can see the project expanding to residential use in other areas of the city.

Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Jones supports a pollinator garden pilot project, and he is interested in volunteering. He commented that he used to participate in the 4-H club

and would like for the city to partner with the organization in an effort to include young people. He further stated that he has three kids and that he could donate \$100 to the effort.

Council member Bothers asked about the initial cost and the source of funds for the pilot.

Council member Orochena responded that she does not foresee the need for much city funding. She has been approached by people who have an interest in volunteering and donating plant materials in partnership with other pollinator gardens.

Council member Tracey Viars asked Orochena who would donate the plants for the pilot project, and she commented that there is no water source in Orochena's chosen location for the pollinator garden.

Council member Orochena noted that there are currently flowers in the planter, and they are surviving without a water source.

Council member Anthony Gutierrez-Leon commented that a true pollinator garden is built to survive in this type of climate and does not require daily watering.

Council member Orochena commented that she wished that more people could witness the sustainability efforts that are occurring in Smith-Gilbert Gardens. She would like to celebrate and expand on those efforts.

Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Jones commented that he would like to see volunteers sign waivers to protect the city from any accidents or injuries that may occur while volunteering.

Council member Orochena asked City Attorney Sam Hensley, Jr. if volunteers could sign a waiver similar to the waivers signed for cemetery cleanup days.

City Attorney Sam Hensley, Jr. commented that the goal of today's discussion was to determine if there was sufficient Council support for Council member Orochena's pollinator garden pilot project. Once that was determined, the concept could be considered by relevant city departments and the legal department.

Mayor Easterling commented that the City is currently tackling a multitude of projects and commitments, and he prefers that the pilot project begin with private businesses. He expressed concern about the level of involvement required by the City. The Mayor also asked Orochena what would be her next steps in the event that volunteers lose interest in the pilot project.

Council member Orochena mentioned the difficulty of soliciting plant material donations for use at a private business. She commented that if the pilot were to fail, it could revert to its former use.

City Manager Jeff Drobney confirmed with Council member Orochena the location of the planter (2847 S. Main Street along J.O. Stephenson Avenue) that would be utilized for the pollinator garden pilot project. He commented that the plant material that is currently in the planter would need to be retrieved by the city and planted elsewhere.

He confirmed with Orochena that she would raise the money needed to procure plant material for the pilot, and that the garden would have to be watered since there is no water source. Drobney and Orochena agreed that if the garden was not successful, the planter could revert to its former use.

Mayor Easterling asked council member Orochena to put together a list of materials that will be donated to the pollinator garden pilot project and submit the list to Council when she is ready to move forward.

Mayor Pro Tem Jones asked if there could be incentives for private businesses to participate in the pollinator community garden pilot project.

Dr. Drobney asked Orochena to notify him when she planned on removing the existing plant material so that the City could plant the material elsewhere.

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 7:22 p.m. The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, May 4, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The public is encouraged to attend.



Nicholas Simpson, Deputy 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
4/27/2026
Public Comment Sign-in**

	Name	Address	Topic
1	Sam Rusch	2459 Pine Dr NW	woodland / ^{now} pine mountain park
2	Mary Miller	3905 Collier Tr	
3	Jeanne Young	3149 Kirkwood Dr Ken	
4	Steven Lutz	3840 Giles Rd	Pollinator Garden
5	Bruno Castellanos	2491 Stonegate Dr	Pollinator Garden
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