CITY OF STATESBORO
COUNCIL MINUTES
AUGUST 18, 2026

Regular Meeting	50 E. Main St. City Hall Council Chambers	5:30 PM

1. Call to Order

Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the meeting to order

2. Invocation and Pledge

City Manager Charles Penny gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ATTENDENCE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jonathan McCollar	Mayor	Present	
Tangie Johnson	Councilmember	Present	
Vacant	Councilmember	Vacant	
Ginny Hendley	Councilmember	Present	
John Riggs	Councilmember	Present	
Shari Barr	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	

Other staff present: City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, Public Affairs Manager Layne Phillips, City Attorney Cain Smith and City Clerk Leah Harden

3. Public Comments (Agenda Item):

Two individuals had signed up to speak on Agenda Item 9 (Flock Safety contract).

Samantha McGuire expressed general opposition to mass surveillance, citing concerns about Fourth Amendment rights and privacy. She stated she was not opposed to general traffic cameras but objected to AI-driven systems feeding data into private algorithms. She also raised concerns about the financial risk to taxpayers if cameras are vandalized or destroyed, noting a national trend of communities destroying such devices and the associated replacement costs being passed on to municipalities.

Willow Farmer echoed those concerns, arguing that a five-year, million-dollar contract with a private company prioritizes corporate interest over community well-being. The speaker urged the council to invest in people rather than surveillance infrastructure, warning that such systems breed distrust and have had negative social and economic impacts in other communities.

4. Consideration of a Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

A) Approval of Minutes

a) 08-04-2026 Council Minutes

b) 08-04-2026 Executive Session Minutes

A motion was made to approve consent agenda.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

Note: By point of privilege, the Mayor moved Agenda Item 8 ahead of Items 5, 6, and 7.

5. **Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve:**

   A) **APPLICATION V 26-07-01: 401 S. Main OZ Business, LLC is requesting a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.12C, which requires a PUD to consist of a minimum ten (10) acre lot. The proposed PUD combines five (5) parcels for a total of 7.54-acres. The property is located between South Main Street and West Brannen Street, and South College Street (Tax Parcel # S21 000001A000, S20 000066 000, S20-000064 000, S20 000065 000, and S20 000065A000).**

   B) **APPLICATION RZ 26-07-02: 401 S. Main OZ Business, LLC is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment from PUD (Planned Unit Development)/R-4 (High Density Residential District), HOC (Highway Oriented Commercial District), and MX (Mixed-Used District) into a PUD (Planned Unit Development). The proposed PUD combines five (5) parcels for a total of 7.54-acres. The property is located on the west side of South Main Street, West Brannen Street, and South College Street (Tax Parcel # S21 000001A000, S20 000066 000, S20-000064 000, S20 000065 000, and S20 000065A000).**

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
SECONDER:	Councilmember John Riggs
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

No one spoke against the request.

Chase Merrill representing the applicant spoke in favor of the request.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

A motion was made to approve with staff recommendations **APPLICATION V 26-07-01**: 401 S. Main OZ Business, LLC is requesting a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.12C, which requires a PUD to consist of a minimum ten (10) acre lot. The proposed PUD combines five (5) parcels for a total of 7.54-acres. The property is located between South Main Street and West Brannen Street, and South College Street (Tax Parcel # S21 000001A000, S20 000066 000, S20-000064 000, S20 000065 000, and S20 000065A000) and **APPLICATION RZ 26-07-02**: 401 S. Main OZ Business, LLC is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment from PUD (Planned Unit Development)/R-4 (High Density Residential District), HOC (Highway Oriented Commercial District), and MX (Mixed-Used District) into a PUD (Planned Unit Development). The proposed PUD combines five (5) parcels for a total of 7.54-acres. The property is located on the west side of South Main Street, West Brannen Street, and South College Street (Tax Parcel # S21 000001A000, S20 000066 000, S20-000064 000, S20 000065 000, and S20 000065A000).

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
SECONDER:	Councilmember John Riggs
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

6. **Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve APPLICATION V 26-07-03: Anthony Hendrickson is requesting a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.11, to allow the use of assembly in LI (Light Industrial) zone for the property located at 201 Johnson Street (Tax Parcel # S18 000175 000).**

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

No one spoke against the request.

Lanika Walden representing Lead by Example spoke in favor of the request.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

A motion was made to approve **APPLICATION V 26-07-03**: Anthony Hendrickson is requesting a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.11, to allow the use of assembly in LI (Light Industrial) zone for the property located at 201 Johnson Street (Tax Parcel # S18 000175 000).

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
SECONDER:	Councilmember John Riggs
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

7. **Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve APPLICATION V 26-07-04: Fincher & Everett Holding LLC is requesting a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.5, Table 2.2.5-A R-15 District Use Permissions to allow the operation of a consulting business in the building located at 206 East Grady Street (Tax Parcel # S29 000121 000).**

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

No one spoke against or for the request.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

A motion was made to approve **APPLICATION V 26-07-04**: Fincher & Everett Holding LLC is requesting a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.5, Table 2.2.5-A R-15 District Use Permissions to allow the operation of a consulting business in the building located at 206 East Grady Street (Tax Parcel # S29 000121 000).

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

8. **Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve APPLICATION RZ 26-07-05: 4AM Development, LLC is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment from R-4 (High-Density Residential District) to O (Office and Business District). The Zoning Map Amendment requests is for one (1) parcel of 26.49-acres locates at 6539 Burkhalter Road for a proposed data center (Tax Parcel# 101 000001 000).**

Director of Planning and Development Justin Williams opened with a contextual overview of the City's recently adopted technological data center ordinance, clarifying what the ordinance does and does not permit. He emphasized that the ordinance was designed to prohibit hyperscale data centers, requiring instead smaller-scale "edge" facilities. Key provisions of the ordinance include: Project Scale: The ordinance permits only smaller-scale data centers, well below the scale of regional facilities such as the 1,200-acre "Project Camellia" in Effingham County. The maximum lot size was set at 50 acres, reduced from an initial staff recommendation of 200 acres at the direction of the Council. Permitted Districts are Highway Oriented Commercial, Light Industrial, Mixed Use, and Office districts. All cases require a Special Use Permit to be approved by the City Council before any building permit may be issued. Utility Use: Connection to municipal sewer and water is required. The ordinance mandates a closed-loop cooling system and requires a water management plan including projected monthly peak water consumption and wastewater disposal plans. Applicants are prohibited from drilling wells or accessing the underlying aquifer. Sound: A noise study establishing baseline ambient conditions must be submitted before a Special Use Permit application is accepted. The ordinance also regulates generator testing schedules.

City Manager Charles Penny addressed the Council and the public directly, stating that since the Planning Commission's August 4 recommendation of approval, a number of inaccurate statements had circulated on social media regarding the City and its staff. He made the following clarifications for the record: No City employee has signed a non-disclosure agreement in connection with this matter or any other matter to his knowledge. The City has offered no tax abatements or incentives to the developer, and none has been requested. The City is not using eminent domain in connection with this project, as no public purpose for eminent domain exists. The City of Statesboro is not building a data center and is not a partner in the project. Staff met with the developer as a routine planning function; the final decision rests solely with the Mayor and City Council. Mr. Penny also defended the professionalism and integrity of City staff, noting that all documents submitted to staff become public record and are available to any citizen upon request.

Mayor McCollar echoed Mr. Penny’s comments and emphasized the City's commitment to transparency, noting that meetings are archived on YouTube. He stated that staff shared the same concerns as the public regarding water use, noise, energy consumption, and scale, and that these concerns had driven the development of the ordinance over the course of nearly a year. He noted the City visited existing edge data center facilities in January and studied best practices before drafting the ordinance. Mayor McCollar noted that the City's largest current water user — a manufacturing plant, not a data center — uses 80,000 gallons per day (approximately 29.2 million gallons per year), and that the closed-loop requirement and ban on well-drilling were specifically designed to protect the local aquifer. He asked residents who had concerns about water, noise, or facility size to consider that each of those concerns had been addressed in the existing ordinance.

Councilmember Riggs added that he had never accepted payments or incentives from any developer and assumed his colleagues on the dais had not either, a statement confirmed by the Mayor and other Council members.

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
SECONDER:	Councilmember John Riggs
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

Director of Planning and Development Justin Williams presented the rezoning application for 6539 Burkhalter Road. The subject property is 26.49 acres currently zoned R-4 (High-Density Residential), which had previously been entitled for approximately 240 apartment units. The applicant requests rezoning to O (Office and Business District). The property is located between a solar farm, an existing subdivision (Bradford Place), and two developing subdivisions, with the Georgia Power transmission line crossing overhead. The site currently contains an older single-family home. The property lies within a "Developing Urban Neighborhood" character area per the City's Comprehensive Plan, within which the Office and Business district is a listed compatible designation. The applicant's conceptual plan shows a 230,000-square-foot, two-story facility centered on the parcel — a building approximately the size of a large commercial structure — situated well within the boundaries of the 26-acre tract. The Office district was recommended as the rezoning target because it is the most compatible non-residential use adjacent to residential property, and because it is the least impactful reversion use should the data center ever be decommissioned. A traffic study submitted by the applicant indicates that the proposed data center use would generate significantly less traffic than the previously entitled 240-unit apartment complex. Any wetland impacts identified on the plan must be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before permitting. A Special Use Permit, with full public review before this Council, is still required before any data center can be developed on the site. Staff recommended approval with one condition: that the applicant provide a right-of-way dedication along Burkhalter Road to allow for future road improvements, consistent with prior annexation commitments. The Planning Commission recommended approval by a 5-to-1 vote at its August 4, 2026 meeting.

Speakers Against:

Sarah Thompson, identifying herself as a U.S. Army veteran with a legal background, raised procedural concerns about the annexation ordinance, alleging inconsistencies in the named property owner between the application and the ordinance, and questioned whether 100% of owners had signed as required under Georgia law. She also raised questions about potential federal involvement and national security designations for the project.

Barbara Ortega, a nearby resident who recently relocated from Atlanta, expressed concern about the impact on her neighborhood, citing school buses, churches, and long-time residents on Cawana Road who moved there for a quiet environment. She questioned why the facility could not be placed in an industrial park away from residential areas.

Marshall Webster opposed the rezoning on grounds that data centers generate little long-term employment, noting that large facilities in other cities employ very few permanent workers. He also questioned the City's integrity given past contracting practices, and suggested the project was speculative.

Meaghan Walsh Gerard with Ogeechee Riverkeeper recommended denial of the rezoning. She argued the application conflicts with the comprehensive plan's Developing Neighborhood character area, which emphasizes walkability, open space, and neighborhood-serving uses. She stated that approving a data center amid residential neighborhoods would devalue surrounding properties, deter future homebuilders, and undermine the community's long-term planning goals.

Don Devine raised health concerns related to electromagnetic frequency exposure from data centers.

Beth Bennett a Bradford Place homeowner who has lived in the neighborhood since 1997 expressed opposition to the rezoning, citing the importance of maintaining the area's residential character and concern about potential property devaluation. She also pointedly asked whether a future council could change the protective ordinances currently in place—a question the council answered affirmatively—and suggested the council consider a city referendum on the matter.

Lindsey Williams raised specific discrepancies between the data presented at Planning Commission meetings (describing a 260,000-square-foot structure) and the conceptual plan submitted (showing 230,000 square feet), and questioned the basis of the submitted noise and traffic studies, noting that those studies were based on the previously proposed residential development rather than data center operations.

Speakers in Support:

Bobby Bagwell, representing 4AM Development, LLC, along with business partner Charles Wade and engineer John Paul Moore of Thomas & Hutton Engineering, presented their position. Mr. Bagwell expressed appreciation for City staff's transparency and thoroughness throughout the process. He acknowledged public concerns and confirmed that they intend to comply fully with the ordinance and the Special Use Permit process. He noted that the 4AM Development received clear title to the property and had no knowledge of the annexation procedural concerns raised by other speakers. He noted that the traffic study demonstrates a significant reduction in traffic compared to the previously approved residential entitlement.

John Paul Moore provided a brief supplemental overview, confirming that the 2-story, approximately 230,000-square-foot facility is modest relative to the 26-acre parcel. He noted that the Office district was chosen in consultation with City staff as the most appropriate zoning because it provides the least impactful fallback use if the data center is ever decommissioned.

Matt Hollingsworth, representing the Home Builders Association of Statesboro, stated that the Association held a round table and found no objections from member builders with projects in the area. He posed three questions on behalf of the Association: (1) whether benchmarking had been done in comparable communities — confirmed by the Mayor; (2) whether the City had plans for use of tax revenues generated — not addressed in specific detail; and (3) whether tax incentives would be offered to the developer — the Mayor responded unequivocally that no incentives would be offered.

Charles Wade came forward to state that the very first meeting staff made it clear that there would be no tax incentives for this development. He also addressed the property value concern, noting that counties with high concentrations of data centers, such as Loudoun County, Virginia, and Alpharetta, Georgia, have some of the highest property values in their respective areas.

Mayor McCollar called on one more individual to come forward to speak.

KiKi Cannon, a District 1 resident, stated that she felt the Council was not adequately hearing from its constituents and asked that her objection be noted.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

Councilmember John Riggs stated that someone alluded earlier that the applicant was building in on spec.

Charles Wade clarified that the project is not being built on spec. While no end-user contract is currently in place, he stated that data centers are incredibly expensive to build and data center operators generally do not engage until zoning is secured. If the zoning is approved we will meet with different developers and choose one that is in line with the ordinance of the city.

Councilmember John Riggs addressed another comment that was made about Planning Commission members being outside of his district as well as outside of the City limits stating that city residents do not apply.

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr asked City Attorney Cain Smith if there was anything in the first presentation that would give him concern about this being legal. City Attorney confirmed he heard no legal concerns in the opposing presentations.

Councilmember John Riggs called on Ms. Bennett to ask her question.

Ms. Bennett asked if the reason why you want to rezone this area because you make more money from business development rather than from residential development?

Mayor McCollar stated that the owner of the property came to the city and made a request to rezone the property.
City Manager Charles Penny shared that office and business zoning is generally considered compatible with adjacent residential uses, serving as a transitional buffer, and that this was the most appropriate zoning district given the nature of the proposed use.

Councilmember John Riggs recognized two other individuals in the audience inviting them to speak.

Lauren Braselton owner of a single family home in the Outpost subdivision stated that she will be able to see the data center if it was built. She asked that the Council ask the developer about their statements regarding property values wondering if the study included property values of the people who live adjacent to the data center.

Lindsey Williams, was recognized during council discussion and raised questions about discrepancies between the square footage cited in staff meetings and the conceptual design, as well as the adequacy of the noise and traffic studies, which she argued were based on the former residential entitlement rather than the proposed data center use.

Mayor McCollar acknowledged these concerns but clarified they were more appropriately addressed during the special use permit stage, not the rezoning.

Councilmember Tangie Johnson offered remarks, noting personal familiarity with data center technology through her employer, and observing that a data center is already operating on Brannen Street in Statesboro and has been since 2020. She stated she is not opposed to it and is in support of the zoning.
Councilmember Ginny Hendley gave remarks in favor of the zoning.

A motion was made to deny **APPLICATION RZ 26-07-05**: 4AM Development, LLC is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment from R-4 (High-Density Residential District) to O (Office and Business District). The Zoning Map Amendment requests is for one (1) parcel of 26.49-acres locates at 6539 Burkhalter Road for a proposed data center (Tax Parcel# 101 000001 000).

RESULT:	Failed 2-3
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
SECONDER:	Councilmember John Riggs
AYES:	Riggs, Barr
NAYS:	Johnson, Hendley, Mayor McCollar broke the tie

A motion was made to approve **APPLICATION RZ 26-07-05**: 4AM Development, LLC is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment from R-4 (High-Density Residential District) to O (Office and Business District). The Zoning Map Amendment requests is for one (1) parcel of 26.49-acres locates at 6539 Burkhalter Road for a proposed data center (Tax Parcel# 101 000001 000).

RESULT:	Approved 3-2
MOVER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Mayor McCollar broke the tie
NAYS:	Riggs, Barr

9. **Consideration of a motion to approve a five-year contract with Flock Safety beginning FY2027 and extending through FY2031. The yearly cost for equipment and services would be $229,500.000 for a total over five years of $1,147,500.00. This contract includes 54 automated license plate readers (LPR's) and 2 square miles of coverage for gunshot detection along with Flock's service and support of said systems.**

A motion was made to approve a five-year contract with Flock Safety beginning FY2027 and extending through FY2031. The yearly cost for equipment and services would be $229,500.000 for a total over five years of $1,147,500.00. This contract includes 54 automated license plate readers (LPR's) and 2 square miles of coverage for gunshot detection along with Flock's service and support of said systems.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

10. Consideration of a motion to approve the purchase of a Caterpillar 430 Backhoe Loader from Yancey Brothers Company in the amount of $205,775.40 to be funded by 2019 SPLOST funds in STS-103.

A motion was made to approve the purchase of a Caterpillar 430 Backhoe Loader from Yancey Brothers Company in the amount of $205,775.40 to be funded by 2019 SPLOST funds in STS-103.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

11. Consideration of a motion to set the dates for the required three (3) public hearings to solicit input regarding the proposed 2026 property tax millage rate of 9.60: 1st Public Hearing September 8th 2026 at 12:00 pm, 2nd Public Hearing September 8th 2026 at 6:00 pm, and the 3rd Public Hearing September 15th 2026 at 5:30 pm.

A motion was made to approve the dates for the required three (3) public hearings to solicit input regarding the proposed 2026 property tax millage rate of 9.60: 1st Public Hearing September 8th 2026 at 12:00 pm, 2nd Public Hearing September 8th 2026 at 6:00 pm, and the 3rd Public Hearing September 15th 2026 at 5:30 pm.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

12. Public Comments (General): None

13. Other Business from City Council: None

14. City Managers Comments

City Manager Charles Penny announced two upcoming events:

- Fire Station No. 3 Ribbon Cutting and Push-In Ceremony: Scheduled for September 15, 2026 at 11:00 AM, to be followed by lunch at the fire station. The event falls on the same day as the council meeting; it will occur a couple of hours prior to the council work session. Formal invitations will be sent via email.
- Ogeechee Technical College Robotics Center Ribbon Cutting: Scheduled for October 15, 2026 at 11:00 AM. A preview presentation may be brought to an upcoming council work session.

15. Consideration of a Motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss "Personnel Matters" "Real Estate" and/or "Potential Litigation" in accordance with O.C.G.A 50-14-3(b).

At 7:21 pm a motion was made to enter into executive session to discuss "Personnel Matters" in accordance with O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(b).

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

At 7:38 pm a motion was made to exit executive session.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the regular meeting back to order with no action taken in executive session.

16. Consideration of a Motion to Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

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Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

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Leah Harden, City Clerk