CITY OF STATESBORO
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 8, 2026

Mayor & Council Public Hearing | 50 East Main Street | 6:00 PM

A Public Hearing was held on September 8, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street, to solicit input from the public on the proposed 2026 millage rate of 9.600 for property taxes.

Present were Mayor Jonathan McCollar, and Council Members: Tangie Johnson, John Riggs, and Shari Barr. Also present were City Clerk Leah Harden, City Attorney Cain Smith, City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, Public Affairs Manager Layne Phillips, other city staff, news media, and members of the public. Absent was Councilmember Ginny Hendley.

1. Call to order

Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the meeting to order.

2. Public Hearing to solicit input on the proposed 2026 millage rate or property taxes.

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

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

City Manager Mr. Penny presented the rationale behind the proposed millage rate increase for FY 2027. He outlined the following budget priorities: a continued emphasis on public safety, retention and recruitment of qualified employees, investment in utility infrastructure, and growth of the City's tax base. He noted that the FY 2027 budget reflects a 5% total budget increase over FY 2026, with a combined 5% increase in the General Fund and Fire Fund, and that no new personnel were added in any department.

The City implemented a 2% pay plan adjustment, continued pay for performance, and for the first time in seven years increased employees to contributions by 15% toward health insurance premiums.

Bulloch County's July 2025 decision to dissolve the fire district and assume its own fire protection as the primary driver of the proposed millage increase. For 47 years, the City had provided fire protection to 96 square miles of the county under a contractual agreement. The termination of that agreement, combined with the expiration of a three-year SAFER federal grant that had funded 12 firefighters, created an estimated $3.4 million revenue loss. As a result, the required General Fund transfer to the Fire Fund increased from $3.2

million to approximately $7.4–7.5 million. In FY 2026, the City covered the shortfall with a one-time loan from enterprise funds, which Mr. Penny characterized as a non-repeatable measure. City Council also chose not to implement a fire service fee, citing multiple pending legal challenges against similar fees in other Georgia communities. Additional factors contributing to the budget increase included $803,000 in salary and benefit costs; $170,000 to absorb the cost of the police FLOCK camera system following the expiration of a three-year grant; $100,000 in increased streetlight costs (on top of an existing ~$600,000 annual expense); $80,000 in increased credit card processing fees; and $80,000 for the annual FUSUS contract.

The final tax digest growth came in at 13%, above the initially projected 8%, which helped reduce the projected shortfall. The City also unexpectedly received five months of Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) revenue — approximately $1.4 million — ahead of the anticipated start date of July 2027, due to state Senate Bill 33. Per state law (the Taxpayer Bill of Rights), these additional revenues required the City to establish a rollback millage rate of 7.165 before any increase could be calculated. Mr. Penny noted that while the increase from 7.165 to 9.60 mills represents approximately 33%, the increase from the original rollback rate of 8.214 to the proposed 9.60 mills constitutes an 11% increase. At the proposed 9.60 mill rate, a home valued at $250,000, the annual city tax bill would increase from $845.25 to $940.80 — an increase of approximately $95.55 per year, or roughly $8 per month. Mr. Penny noted that even at the proposed 9.60 mill rate, the City of Statesboro would remain below the Bulloch County rate of 10.260 mills and the Bulloch County Board of Education rate of 10.125 mills.

Mr. Penny projected that in FY 2028, the City would be in a position to roll back the millage rate by the equivalent of at least 2.1 mills, as the full annual FLOST revenue of approximately $3.5 million becomes available to offset fire protection costs.

Mr. Penny confirmed his recommendation to set the millage rate at 9.60 mills, up from the current 8.625 mills, and clarified that capital expenditures such as fire trucks and fire station debt are funded through SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) revenues, not property taxes. He also addressed misinformation circulating on social media, stating that council members receive no additional compensation as a result of a millage rate increase.

Randall Groover an 83-year-old resident expressed concern about the cumulative burden of rising property taxes, utility costs, and living expenses on elderly and fixed-income residents.
Mayor McCollar acknowledged these concerns and noted community partnerships with a local food bank (serving approximately 3,400 families per month), Bryants Lending for reduced-rate senior housing, and Action Pact for utility and rent assistance.

Kathleen Keehner questioned the inclusion of the $170,000 FLOCK camera expenditure in the budget and raised broader concerns about community trust, surveillance, and the precedent set by grant-funded programs that ultimately become permanent budget obligations.
Mayor McCollar addressed the tension issue around FLOCK use, citing specific homicide investigations resolved through the technology while affirming that any confirmed misuse would result in immediate termination and prosecution.

Josiah McDaniel asked for clarification on whether the projected 2.1-mill rollback in FY 2028 would be measured from 9.60 or from 8.625.
Mr. Penny confirmed it would apply to whatever rate is ultimately adopted and clarified that $3.5 million in annual FLOST revenue translates to approximately 2.1–2.7 mills at current values, though he characterized the figure as a projection subject to revenue variability.
Mr. McDaniel also expressed frustration with the pace of change to his property taxes since becoming a homeowner in Statesboro — noting his mortgage had already increased $100 per month due to property tax adjustments — and raised broader concerns about Council decisions he felt ran counter to public input,

including the Kroger development and a proposed data center in a residential area. He noted that District 2 currently has no seated council representative, and questioned who was representing those residents.

Cathy Dixon acknowledged the Council's decision not to implement a fire service fee given ongoing litigation in other Georgia communities, but challenged the Council and City Manager to actively engage state legislators to provide legal protections that would allow municipalities to recover costs from tax-exempt properties.

Herb Miller stated that in his view, the conversation consistently focuses on raising taxes rather than cutting costs, and that any organization facing a budget shortfall must look at expenditure reduction. He suggested that rather than eliminating 60 positions outright, the City could consider targeted reductions, including addressing underperforming employees. He expressed skepticism that promised tax rollbacks would materialize in future years, noting he had heard similar assurances throughout his decades as a Statesboro resident.

No one spoke in favor of the proposed millage rate increase.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

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

3. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

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Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

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Leah Harden, City Clerk