



CITY OF STATESBORO
COUNCIL MINUTES
MARCH 17, 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

Councilmember Paulette Chavers gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ATTENDANCE

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

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

3. Recognitions/Public Presentations:

A) Presentation of a Proclamation recognizing March 16-20, 2026 as Government Finance Professionals week.

Mayor McCollar read aloud the proclamation designating the third week of March 2026 as Government Finance Professionals Week in Statesboro, Georgia. The proclamation recognized the essential services that government finance professionals provide in ensuring effective, transparent, and responsible management of public funds. It acknowledged their expertise in budgeting, accounting, treasury management, procurement, debt administration, auditing, fiscal reporting, and long-range financial planning.

Finance Director Cindy West then recognized the city's finance staff individually, highlighting their years of service: Leah Coleman (Administrative Assistant, 4+ years), Heidi Varnadore (Accounts Payable Technician, 2+ years), Ansley Lewis (Payroll Specialist, 6+ years), Heather Springer (Accountant, 7+ years), Ramona Carver (Assistant Senior Accountant, 17+ years), and Karin Larson (Assistant Finance Director, 9+ years). Cindy West also noted her own 29+ years of service with the city. Mayor McCollar praised the finance team, stating that the citizens of Statesboro are in good hands and expressing appreciation for their long-term dedication to the organization.

B) Presentation of a retirement award to Captain Christopher Moore in the Statesboro Fire Department who is retiring effective April 1, 2026 after 25 years of dedicated service.

Mayor McCollar read a heartfelt tribute to Captain Christopher Moore, who is retiring after 25 years of dedicated service to the Statesboro Fire Department. The tribute emphasized Moore's dependability, pride, professionalism, and commitment to serving the community. It noted that Moore received two significant promotions during his career: to Lieutenant in January 2009 and to Captain in May 2011.

Captain Moore expressed his appreciation for the turnout of his firefighter brothers and asked them to join him for a group photograph. The mayor called it a bittersweet moment and thanked Moore for his 25 years of service, wishing him God's blessings in his future endeavors.

- 4. Public Comments (Agenda Item):** None
- 5. Consideration of a Motion to approve the Consent Agenda**
 - A) Approval of Minutes**
 - a) 03-03-2026 Council Minutes**
 - b) 03-03-2026 Executive Session Minutes**

A motion was made to approve consent agenda.

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

- 6. Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve APPLICATION V 26-02-01: Roy Patel requests a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.9- MX Table – B Dimensional Standards for a property located at corner of Woodford Lane and Veterans Memorial Parkway, to allow for an increase of the setback from 25 feet to 85 feet for a new hotel fronting Woodford Lane (Tax Parcel # MS42000007 005).**

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

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

No members of the public spoke for or against Application V 26-02-01.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

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

A motion was made to approve with staff conditions **APPLICATION V 26-02-01**: Roy Patel requests a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.9- MX Table – B Dimensional Standards for a property located at corner of Woodford Lane and Veterans Memorial Parkway, to allow for an increase of the setback from 25 feet to 85 feet for a new hotel fronting Woodford Lane (Tax Parcel # MS42000007 005).

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

- 7. Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve APPLICATION V 26-02-02: Town Center Statesboro LLC requests a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.9- MX Table – B Dimensional Standards for a property located at corner of Eddie Rushing Road and Veterans Memorial Parkway, to allow for an increase of the setback from 25 feet to 75 feet for a new hotel fronting Eddie Rushing Road (Tax Parcel # MS63000026 032).**

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

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

No members of the public spoke for or against Application V 26-02-02.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

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

A motion was made to approve with staff conditions **APPLICATION V 26-02-02**: Town Center Statesboro LLC requests a Variance from UDC Section 2.2.9- MX Table – B Dimensional Standards for a property located at corner of Eddie Rushing Road and Veterans Memorial Parkway, to allow for an increase of the setback from 25 feet to 75 feet for a new hotel fronting Eddie Rushing Road (Tax Parcel # MS63000026 032).

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

8. Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve RESOLUTION 2026-10: A Resolution authorizing the submission of an application to the Department of Community Affairs for the Community Development Block Grant.

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

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

Director of Planning and Development Justin Williams explained that a public hearing is required for applying for CDBG funds, and staff has been working diligently to prepare everything necessary for submission.

City Manager Charles Penny elaborated that this application differs from past applications. Previously, the city had emphasized housing rehabilitation but had not been successful in getting approval. The current application focuses on infrastructure improvements, which are more likely to be approved. The project would help improve infrastructure in older sections of town that still have substandard water lines, which are needed for fire protection as well.

The infrastructure improvements would focus on the Roundtree and Church Street areas, addressing substandard water lines and drainage issues.

No members of the public spoke for or against the request.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

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

A motion was made to approve **Resolution 2026-10**: A Resolution authorizing the submission of an application to the Department of Community Affairs for the Community Development Block Grant.

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

9. Public Hearing & Consideration of a Motion to approve application for an alcohol license in accordance with The City of Statesboro alcohol ordinance Sec. 6-13 (a)

Gators & Gypsies LLC
Owner: Gators & Gypsies LLC
19 E. Vine St., Bldg. A
License Type: Bar

Councilmember Ginny Hendley recused herself from this item.

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

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

No members of the public spoke for or against the request.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

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

A motion was made to approve an application for an alcohol license in accordance with The City of Statesboro alcohol ordinance Sec. 6-13 (a) issued to Gators & Gypsies LLC, Owner: Gators & Gypsies LLC, located at 19 E. Vine St., Bldg. A, for License Type: Bar.

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

10. Consideration of a motion to approve Resolution 2026-11: A Resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute documents necessary to convey a segment of City right-of-way along Savannah Avenue to S&K Investments in exchange for a segment of real property along Old Register Road.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 2026-11: A Resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute documents necessary to convey a segment of City right-of-way along Savannah Avenue to S&K Investments in exchange for a segment of real property along Old Register Road.

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

11. Consideration of a motion to approve Resolution 2026-12: A Resolution approving application for the 2026 Cigarette Litter Prevention & Recycling Program Grant through Keep America Beautiful. No matching funds are required.

A motion was made to approve **Resolution 2026-12**: A Resolution approving application for the 2026 Cigarette Litter Prevention & Recycling Program Grant through Keep America Beautiful. No matching funds are required.

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

12. Consideration of a motion to approve a 30-year ground lease at the Statesboro-Bulloch County Airport with HDM Enterprises, Inc.

City Attorney Cain Smith explained that this was a 30-year ground lease where the lessee would build out a hangar on the property, and at the termination of the 30 years, it would revert back to the city and county who co-own the airport property. He noted that a revised lease was received from the county after the packet was prepared for distribution. The lessee is Airport JV, LLC not HDM Enterprises, Inc.

A motion was made to approve a 30-year ground lease at the Statesboro-Bulloch County Airport with Airport JV, LLC not HDM Enterprises, Inc. as stated by City Attorney Cain Smith.

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

13. Consideration of a motion to approve a 30-year ground lease at the Statesboro-Bulloch County Airport with Statesboro Airport JV, LLC.

City Attorney Cain Smith explained that this lease is with the same entity and follows the same terms as the one recently approved; however, it pertains to a different lot.

A motion was made to approve a 30-year ground lease at the Statesboro-Bulloch County Airport with Statesboro Airport JV, LLC.

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

14. Consideration of a motion to approve a contract amendment with Lavender & Associates, Inc. for \$20,622.38 to cover additional work on ENG-141 Whitesville Park, to be funded by ARPA funds.

A motion was made to approve a contract amendment with Lavender & Associates, Inc. for \$20,622.38 to cover additional work on ENG-141 Whitesville Park, to be funded by ARPA funds.

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

15. Consideration of a motion to award a contract to The Charles Machine Works, Inc. for the purchase of a Ditch Witch RT45B Trencher per Sourcewell cooperative purchasing contract in the amount of \$76,874.88. This item to be purchased with funds approved in the 2026 CIP Budget, item #NGD-48, funded by system revenues.

A motion was made to approve an award of contract to The Charles Machine Works, Inc. for the purchase of a Ditch Witch RT45B Trencher per Sourcewell cooperative purchasing contract in the amount of \$76,874.88. This item to be purchased with funds approved in the 2026 CIP Budget, item #NGD-48, funded by system revenues.

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

16. Public Comments (General):

Kirsten Mengell, a Doctor of Public Health student at Georgia Southern, presented information about her dissertation research focusing on community mental health solutions for the Black and African American community in Bulloch County. She has conducted surveys, focus groups, and community interviews to understand mental health challenges, barriers, and needs. Moving into the next phase of building community capacity, she is seeking input and support from community leaders to improve infrastructure and opportunities. She provided flyers with project details and contact information.

Annie Bellinger addressed issues she experienced at the food bank after being released from the hospital. She described being initially accommodated in the dining room due to being in a wheelchair, but later being told by a staff member to sit in the general area with everyone else. When she explained that a worker had previously directed her to the dining room, she felt the staff member called her a liar. She expressed frustration with what she perceived as poor treatment of handicapped individuals and asked the council to address the situation. Mayor McCollar assured her they would follow up with the facility director and asked her to contact them if any other issues arise.

Reverend Larry Robbins raised several concerns about his neighborhood, including water drainage issues in his driveway that he said the city had unsuccessfully attempted to fix with a shovel. He proposed installing a concrete culvert to direct water to a street ditch. He also called for resurfacing and paving of city streets in his area and installation of speed limit signs. Regarding Luetta Moore Park, he expressed concern that the pool remains full of dirty water with pollen after the season ended, creating a safety hazard for children. He requested regulatory hours be posted and gates installed from both the MLK and Church Street sides, noting problems with drug use and needles that could endanger children. He also announced his candidacy for city council and provided his address as 105 President Circle.

Margot Bragg addressed the complex issue of orangeburg pipe deterioration in older neighborhoods. She explained that orangeburg pipe, made of wood pulp and coal tar, becomes brittle over time and can be damaged during the city's cured-in-place pipe (CIPP) process for repairing mains. The CIPP process can accelerate deterioration of lateral pipes where homeowner connections meet city mains, potentially causing groundwater pressure issues. She referenced the city's 2023 ordinance making homeowners responsible for lateral pipe repairs, which can cost up to \$50,000. She requested that the city educate residents about this ordinance and their responsibilities, noting many homeowners are surprised to learn they must repair pipes in city right-of-way under city roads. She emphasized the importance of proactive rather than reactive approaches and offered to volunteer to help educate citizens.

Mayor McCollar acknowledged that this issue is on the agenda for the upcoming council retreat and noted that there had been a previous recommendation to address it that had not passed at the time. He expressed hope that the upcoming discussion would lead to a better solution.

Cathy Dixon, a 10-year city resident, addressed traffic flow issues at older intersections. She praised the upgrades on College Street at West Main with traffic cameras but noted that lights do not work together, causing backup issues. She highlighted problems at Grady and Jones Streets where slow light changes and left-turn situations can prevent cars from getting through multiple light cycles. She suggested considering making Grady and Jones one-way to eliminate left-turn problems. Dixon also noted issues at Zetterower and Highway 80, where turn lanes exist but traffic lights lack turn signals, and at Tillman and Zetterower where drivers can sit through 2-3 light cycles. She advocated for improving traffic flow on older roads as an alternative to relying solely on the bypass and Highway 80, especially given the city's continued growth and the fact that Georgia Southern students bring approximately two cars each. She urged council to "move the box down the road" rather than just thinking outside the box.

Mayor McCollar thanked Dixon and noted that in the recent State of the City address, they shared that Statesboro's daily population reaches around 100,000 people, acknowledging the frustrating traffic situation and the city's efforts to address it.

17. Other Business from City Council

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr highlighted several upcoming community events. She announced the second annual Statesboro Festival of the Arts, taking place at the Visit Statesboro Farmer's Market location on South Main, featuring

over 70 artists with sculptures, paintings, weaving, and other regional art. The free event runs Saturday 10 AM to 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM to 4 PM, with free children's activities.

She also announced the tenth annual Green Festival on Saturday, March 28th, from 1-5 PM on East Vine Street behind City Hall, featuring vendors and a bicycle celebration where adults and children can decorate their bikes and participate. She also mentioned that the Statesboro Business Commission is sponsoring an open workshop on business development on Thursday, March 26th, from 6:00-7:30 PM for anyone interested in starting a new business or learning how to work with the city for business creation.

Finally, she thanked the mayor for flying flags at half-mast in honor of Roy Thompson, a great citizen of Bulloch County who had recently passed away.

18. City Managers Comments

City Manager Charles Penny began by explaining the heavy traffic experienced in Statesboro the previous week, was caused by the bypass closure for railroad crossing repairs. He noted this gave residents an appreciation for having the bypass, as tractor-trailers and all traffic had to come through town.

Mr. Penny announced that Downtown Live would return April 9th at 7:00 PM on Main Street, featuring Liquid Pleasure as the first band.

He informed council of an emergency repair needed for Well 10, the city's most productive well producing 2,200 gallons per minute. The well, located in the Brooklet Park area, experienced a sudden drop in production and required immediate repair due to its critical role in water supply.

Mr. Penny shared exciting news about Statesboro Summit being approved for a 4% qualified application plan for low income housing tax credits, representing a \$9.7 million project to refurbish 98 affordable housing units. He recognized Housing Authority Director Monifa Johnson for her work on this achievement.

Monifa Johnson then addressed the council, explaining that the Housing Authority had never previously participated in the low income housing tax credit program when she arrived. They had to create the tax incentive and tax-free bond inducement program before accepting applications. After working since 2022 on this highly competitive program, they successfully partnered with Statesboro Summit to secure \$9.75 million in federal tax credits through the state housing agency. She explained that corporations purchase these tax-free products, with the purchase money funding the redevelopment while corporations receive tax credits. She emphasized this was a momentous first achievement for the Housing Authority as an affordable housing developer.

Mr. Penny announced that the council retreat would take place Friday and Saturday in Augusta, starting at 8:30 AM Friday and ending at noon Saturday.

Lastly, Mr. Penny addressed a critical legislative issue. House Bill 1116, passed by the General Assembly the previous Friday, would significantly impact all Georgia cities and counties by limiting their ability to increase property taxes to 3% annually. He explained the city's budget structure: a total budget of \$103 million, with a general fund of \$27 million funded by property taxes representing only one-third (\$9 million). He noted that the fire department budget alone is \$8 million and police is \$12 million, meaning property taxes do not even cover these two essential public safety services.

The bill would require cities to seek General Assembly approval through local acts and potentially face referendums to raise taxes beyond 3%. This could jeopardize the city's ability to pay debt obligations, particularly since they use full faith and credit to secure favorable bond rates. Mr. Penny used the example that 3% of their \$9 million property tax revenue would only provide \$270,000 additional revenue, which might be insufficient for operational needs.

Mayor McCollar added that while the concept sounds good in theory, the bill adds 3 cents per dollar in sales tax. He explained that savings from property tax limitations would be offset by increased costs on everyday goods like milk, clothes, and cars. For someone paying \$1,000-\$2,000 annually in property taxes, they would pay more through the additional sales tax than they save on property taxes. He noted that cities statewide oppose this bill and criticized the lack of consultation with local governments before its introduction.

Given that, the General Assembly was scheduled to adjourn March 30th and the bill would take effect in January 2028, Mr. Penny requested council approval of a resolution opposing the bill to send to their state representatives and senator, emphasizing the time-sensitive nature of the request.

Council members expressed agreement with opposing the bill, with Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr noting it appeared to reverse home rule by having Atlanta decide local matters.

A motion was made to approve a Resolution regarding HB1116 and its impact on local government finances, credit ratings, and tax equity; and urging members of the Georgia General Assembly to amend or oppose the legislation.

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

19. 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 6:50 pm, a motion was made to enter into executive session to discuss “Real Estate” in accordance with O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(a).

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

At 6:56 pm, a motion was made to exit executive session.

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

20. Consideration of a Motion to Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk