



CITY OF STATESBORO
WORK SESSION MINUTES
OCTOBER 21, 2025

Mayor & Council Work Session

50 East Main Street

3:30 PM

A Work Session of the Statesboro City Council was held on October 21, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street. Present was Mayor Jonathan McColiar; Council Members: Tangie Johnson, Paulette Chavers, John Riggs and Shari Barr. Also present was City Clerk Leah Harden, City Attorney Cain Smith, City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles and Public Affairs Manager Layne Phillips. Absent was Councilmember Ginny Hendley.

1. Gas Infrastructure

Matt Aycock, Director of Public Utilities provided Mayor and Council with an overview of the City's natural gas infrastructure, noting that the original 6-inch high-pressure gas line from Screven County was installed in the 1950s and is still the main supply line 70 years later. He explained how the system has been extended over the years: in the 1990s to feed Gateway Industrial Park, Walmart Distribution, and Briggs and Stratton, in the 2000s to serve the City of Metter and in 2010 to Bruce Young and Doug Park. Matt emphasized that the city has now essentially reached capacity due to the Hyundai plant and related growth, with only about 75 MCFs per hour available in the industrial park area.

Jack Sapp of Sapp Engineering Services presented 2 scenarios to increase the natural gas capacity. Scenario 1: This option would involve Statesboro building a line from Highway 80 at Highway 280 up to Highway 301 at an estimated cost of \$20 million. This would add 685 MCF per hour in capacity and create opportunities to serve new customers along the route.

Scenario 2: This would involve sharing costs with Claxton, where Statesboro would run a 12-inch line and connect with Claxton's system. This would provide 960 MCF per hour for Statesboro at a cost of approximately \$17 million for Statesboro (with Claxton contributing \$5.5 million).

Chris Cohen the director of economic development with the Municipal Gas Authority discussed how the Hyundai plant significantly accelerated the demand for natural gas in the region. He emphasized the importance of system redundancy, explaining that a recent gas leak incident could have been handled better if there had been interconnection between systems. Cohen mentioned funding options including a new Senate Bill 13 that allows GEFA to fund natural infrastructure, and the Municipal Gas Authority's willingness to help with project funding.

2. Policy for Private Streets – Creating a Special Service District

Olympia Gaines Assistant to the City Manager provided an update on the proposed policy for private streets. Olympia presented draft documents for a special service district (SSD) ordinance and private streets policy, which included revisions since the previous presentation. She explained that staff met with the Cobblestone subdivision HOA on October 13th to share information about the proposed SSD ordinance and street policy, answering questions and providing rough cost estimates for street improvements. Olympia noted that Brad with engineering and his staff are working to secure more specific cost information. Once obtained, notices will be sent to all Cobblestone residents detailing the process, costs, and other relevant information before

proceeding to a public hearing and first reading. The process that would follow the ordinance adoption includes: property owners would receive a petition to distribute among residents to support or oppose the SSD, residents would have 90 days to obtain the minimum threshold of signatures (75% recommended), if successful, the petition would be returned to the city of verification, a public hearing would be held to review the details and council would then consider adopting a resolution to create the SSD.

Councilmembers agreed with the 75% threshold recommendation. City Manager Charles Penny emphasized that the city would not just leave the process to the HOA, but would help identify and notify all property owners, while the HOA would assist in encouraging residents participation.

3. Creek on the Blue Mile – Contract

Brad Deal, Director of Engineering and Public Works provided an update on the Creek on the Blue Mile project, explaining that due to multiple funding sources, the project is being divided into three different contracts, this is just for the design and not the construction.

Contract 1 is the drainage and flood control on the creek from West Jones Ave to Gentilly Road, the City received a grant from GEFA for \$5.5 million dollars approximately \$2.7 million is remaining. Some of it was used in the previous design work from Freeze and Nicholes. Following a state procurement process after the Freeze and Nicholes contract was terminated, EMC Engineering was selected after a new RFQ, in terms of evaluation that staff did.

Contract 2 is the design of a multi-use trail on both sides of the creek from South College Street to Zetterower Ave. The city received a TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) grant administered by GDOT for \$2,120,000 for construction, but additional funds are needed for the estimated \$1.7 million design costs.

Contract 3 is for the design of new bridges at South Main, Fair Road, and Zetterower Ave, with \$3 million awarded for design and an additional \$6.5 million for construction. Michael Baker International has been selected as the consultant, with negotiations nearing completion

He noted that they are currently trying to secure additional TAP funding for the design of the multi-use trail. While the bridge design could potentially move forward independently, the trail and drainage components are closely interlocked. GDOTs approval process is complex and it affects the project's cost and timeliness. We should have something to present to council at the first meeting in November.

4. Data Centers

Justin Williams, Director of Planning, presented information on data centers, explaining they are dedicated facilities for housing computer systems, storage drives, and networking equipment. Justin provided a historical overview, showing how they have evolved from the 1940s to modern hyperscale facilities. Justin noted that Georgia lacks established best practices for regulating data centers, and municipalities are largely left to determine their own approaches. Currently, there isn't even a Development Regional Impact process in place for these facilities, though DCA and the regional commission are expected to establish one by November. Economic impacts of data centers are; substantial tax revenue, low public service demands, limited job creation, potential to attract other tech development. Infrastructure and environmental concerns are enormous energy consumption, potential high water consumption, possible natural gas demand and environmental impacts from backup generators and tree canopy loss. Justin noted that the City's ordinances contain only one reference to data storage centers, and recommended that staff research and create appropriate legislation as the city has received multiple inquiries about data center development. Staff recommends allowing an ordinance regarding data centers moving forward. Mayor stated he would like to put his eyes on one of the buildings to see it himself. City Manager Charles Penny agreed, emphasizing the importance of understanding the impact before establishing zoning requirements.

5. Bike Lanes

Justin Williams, Director of Planning, provided information about the city's current requirements for bike lanes and sidewalks in new developments. He explained that the UDC (Unified Development Code) categorizes streets as local, collector, or arterial roads, with different right-of-way requirements for each. He noted that the city's comprehensive plan includes retrofitting suitable roads for bicycle traffic and identifies 13 bike and pedestrian projects for the next five years. The strategic plan also addresses collaboration with Public works and the Greener Boro Commission to identify suitable areas for bicycle projects. Current requirements for sidewalks include: mandatory sidewalks for new developments on arterial and collector roads, required sidewalks for townhome developments and commercial developments on public rights-of-way and no requirement for sidewalks in standard subdivisions unless there's a public safety issue.

Justin stated that most developers are voluntarily including sidewalks in new subdivisions because they recognize their value, even though not required. He stated that the Fern Hill Farms neighborhood was built with incentives that required sidewalks on at least one side.

Justin discussed "complete streets" principals that create roadways providing safe transportation for everyone, but noted these are typically more appropriate for urbanized areas. Staff recommends to continue integrating capital projects with sidewalk enhancement opportunities and apply complete street principals to municipal projects, but not to require bike lanes in new developments due to safety concerns and cost implications.

6. Update on Building in Statesboro

Justin Williams Director of Planning provided an update on the housing development in Statesboro, reporting approximately 5,870 new units approved, with about 3,090 currently under some stage of construction. He presented permit issuance data comparing January – October 2024 to the same period in 2023: 2023 125 total permits for residential and multifamily and 2024 had 400 permits issued, showing a significant increase. The valuation of single-family development had increased dramatically with 2023 having \$1.6 million in single-family development and 2024 having \$30 million in valuation for single-family permits.

Justin noted that while there was some slowdown in residential development, this was partially due to a shift toward commercial development. He presented a map showing development spread across the city, with areas in red indicating vertical construction already underway.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:51 pm.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk