

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester
City Council Regular Meeting
City Hall Council Chambers
Monday, June 16, 2025
Call to Order 6:00 p.m.

Attendees: Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.
Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1
Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2
Councilman Mark Giddens, Ward 3
Mayor Pro-Tem Councilman Earnest Carter, Jr., Ward 4
City Manager Chris Davis
Assistant City Manager Richie Childers
Assistant City Manager Tanita Norris
City Attorney Lester Castellow
City Clerk Markesha Bivens

Call to Order: Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.

Invocation/Pledge: Dr. Willie Mae Marlin

Agenda Amendment/Approval

With no amendments, and a request by Councilman Jackson, and a second from Councilman Powell, the city council meeting agenda gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Minutes Approval

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Giddens, the May 19, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Speakers Appearance: None

Presentation

Mr. Michael Allen, Sylvester Housing Authority Chief Executive Director
Mr. Michael Allen and Mr. William Beatty, Managing Partner of the Beatty Group, an Atlanta, Georgia-based consulting firm that specializes in housing development, delivered information on the 710 West Price Street Redevelopment.

In Ward 2, a concept plan to preserve the J.W. Holley High School grounds and Holley name with 100 units of multifamily housing, 80 units of senior living (with mixed income requirements), a civic center, walking trail with green space around the existing pond, two (2) ball fields and playground, with mention of a four (4) story building, businesses or offices on the first floor, storm water control, legality and public input allowed for additional discussion. The estimated project cost is a total of \$31.38 million.

No action was taken on this agenda item.

Old Business

Bid Opening on Surplus Property

City Manager Chris Davis reminded of the bid opening held May 30, 2025, with one (1) bid received for the surplus property near the City of Sylvester Maintenance Shop. In summary, an advertisement notified of the city's public sale, and accepting sealed bids for the 3.249 acres, identified as plat number 046-0325. One bid was received for \$8,000 by Total A Investments, Dr. Artavious Smith. It was mentioned that the Mayor and Council have the right to reject all offers; noting that the property is land locked, once purchased by the city in a package, and may not have the same interest or price offered, due to no public road access, if it is rebid.

Upon motion by Councilman Powell, seconded by Councilman Giddens, the surplus property, plat number 046-0325, was awarded to Total A Investments, the highest bidder. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

New Business

A. Board Appointments

i. Library Board

Mr. Davis informed the Mayor and Council of the two (2) city board members, an elected official and an at large representative on the Library Board of Trustees; Councilman J. Mark Giddens, and at-large, Ms. Becky Geer. Ms. Geer's term expires on June 30, 2025, and she wishes to serve, with the library's agreement, for another three (3) year term. Per Ms. Leigh Wiley, Margaret Jones Public Library Director, with reappointment, Ms. Geer's term will begin July 1, 2025, and end on June 30, 2028.

Upon motion by Councilman Carter, and seconded by Councilmen Giddens and Jackson, all together, the reappointment of Ms. Becky Geer to the Library Board of Trustees gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

ii. Planning Commission

Mrs. Glenice Stephens, Community Development Director, approached the Mayor and Council for the reappointment of Mr. Paul Woody to the Planning Commission, Board Member at large. Mr. Woody has served for 20 years and is interested in another four (4) year term and was present for introduction and questions; the Mayor and Council expressed thanks to Mr. Woody for his dedication. No vote was taken for this agenda item.

B. Event/Request to Close Street Application(s): Georgia Peanut Festival

Georgia Peanut Festival Committee Members, Mrs. Kayla Meyers and Mrs. Jessica Crannis stood before the Mayor and Council to express appreciation for continued support. The event applications and road closure requests were submitted and approval is requested, in preparation for the 61st Peanut Festival this year.

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, and seconded by Councilman Carter, the Georgia Peanut Festival event and request to close street applications gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

C. July Council Meeting Discussion

Mr. Davis informed that the July City Council meeting is on a date on which the Mayor, Council and senior staff will be at the MEAG Annual Meeting. A proposed date to reschedule the council meeting is July 21 at the same time, should the Mayor and Council agree.

With unanimous consent, the date for the next regularly scheduled Council Meeting, July 21, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., gained approval upon mention.

20025-2026 Fiscal Year Proposed Budget

A. Work Shop

Mr. Davis announced the purpose of this Workshop/Public Hearing was to review the proposed budget of the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and to hear public comments.

The Mayor and Council received all necessary documents and staff ensured meeting requirements were met by law, advertised and available for public viewing.

With a motion from Councilman Jackson, and a second by Councilman Giddens, the Public Hearing was called to Order. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

B. 2nd Public Hearing

Called to order at 6:54 p.m.

Mr. Davis reminded the council of the remaining date for the Budget, the Special Called FY26 Budget Adoption Meeting, June 26, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. and presented the FY26 proposed budget. It was mentioned that city staff worked diligently to balance and reduce costs accordingly. The built-in 3% pay raise for employees, salaries, aging infrastructure, equipment, grant funding/matching funds, airport growth, broadband and mid-level utility rates were all discussed. Improvements to parks and recreational areas, like Pope and Jeffords Parks, were mentioned, as well as replacing storm pipes and sewer lines throughout the city, where funds should be allocated.

There were no comments from the public.

Upon motion by Councilman Powell, with second by Councilman Jackson, the Public Hearing adjourned. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

The Public Hearing adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Reports/Remarks

Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1 – Councilman Powell had no report.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2 – Councilman Jackson had no report.

Councilman J. Mark Giddens, Ward 3 – Councilman Giddens had no report.

Councilman Earnest Carter Jr., Ward 4 – Councilman Carter inquired on the status of Attorney Castellow's review of the City of Sylvester providing meals for the Mary Alice Shipp Center as opposed to the SOWEGA Council on Aging.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. – Mayor Proctor searched for clarity with the senior meals; a waiting list for vouchers from the SOWEGA Council on Aging, meal delivery versus walk-ins and meal pick up, with Councilman Jackson were discussed.

City Attorney Lester Castellow – Attorney Castellow had no report.

City Manager Chris Davis – Mr. Davis stated training will take place June 20-24, 2025, in Savannah, Georgia. City Hall will close for observance of Juneteenth on Thursday, June 19, 2025, with Personal Financial Disclosure Sheets for the council due at the end of the month to City Clerk Bivens.

Executive Session

Councilman Powell moved to convene an Executive Session to discuss litigation, personnel and real estate, seconded by Councilman Jackson. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Executive Session Begins: 7:17 p.m.

Councilman Giddens motioned to accept minutes as read in Executive Session and reconvene, seconded by Councilman Jackson, collectively. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Regular Session Reconvenes: 7:56 p.m.

Announcements

Mr. Davis provided information of the recent Environmental Protection Department (EPD), Georgia Soil and Water inspection took place at the new jail site on South Isabella, where several issues were found. The Worth County Commissioner was contacted by the EPD representative as a result, and a stop cease and desist order was issued by the city.

At this time, no contact with the county has occurred, but noted should the 15 issues currently out of compliance be resolved, with plans updated, the city could lift the stop work order.

Adjournment

With all agenda items covered, Councilman Giddens motioned to adjourn, with a second by Councilman Carter. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Mayor Proctor duly adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK