

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester
City Council Regular Meeting
City Hall Council Chambers
Monday, August 18, 2025
Call to Order 6:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Assistant City Manager Tanita Norris

Call to Order: Mayor Pro-Tem Councilman Earnest Carter, Jr.

Invocation/Pledge: Dr. Willie Mae Marlin

Agenda

With a request to add a presentation of an award for the Sylvester Fire Department following the Speakers Appearance section, Councilman Giddens made a motion to approve the amended council meeting agenda. Councilman Powell seconded the motion. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Powell. The motion carried, 4-0.

Speakers Appearance

Mr. Todd Spence of 3G's Auction Company thanked the Mayor and Council for the opportunity to provide auction services for the city. He presented results of the recent auction with generated funds of \$13,719.50 for vehicles sold as surplus property and expressed appreciation to the staff for their assistance in the preparation of the auction.

Award Presentation: Sylvester Fire Department

Chief Jack Colby informed the Mayor and City Council that the Sylvester Fire Department (SFD) had received a special plaque from Lexipol in recognition of its outstanding training performance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SFD not only met but exceeded training requirements. This commitment to ongoing training contributes to an improved ISO rating, which can positively impact local insurance rates. The City Council commended the Fire Department for its dedication and congratulated them on this achievement.

Unfinished Business

Worth County Ram Alumni Reunion (WCRAR) Weekend

City Manager Chris Davis provided an update on repairs and upgrades taking place near the H.H. Woolard Center in preparation for the upcoming Worth County Ram Alumni Reunion (WCRAR) weekend events and the July 4th Celebration. Improvements currently underway include fence repairs and the installation of approximately six (6) light poles to enhance lighting in the area.

A discussion followed regarding staffing and security support from the Sylvester Police Department (SPD). Due to ongoing staffing shortages, SPD is unable to alternate shifts as done in previous years. Officers will maintain regular patrols throughout the city but will not be available to provide dedicated security within the event venue. It was noted that neighboring communities are experiencing similar law enforcement staffing challenges. SPD will provide patrol coverage along the perimeter of the events. Mr. Jarvis Jefferson further advised that the Worth County Sheriff's Office has agreed to provide seven (7) deputies to assist with security.

Regarding the original request submitted by the WCRAR Association, all requested items have been addressed except for the donation amount. Staff recommended a contribution of \$4,000, consistent with the amount provided last year, versus the \$5,000 originally requested.

Upon a motion by Councilman Powell, seconded by Councilman Giddens, the request to donate \$4,000 to the Worth County Ram Alumni Reunion Association was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Mr. Jarvis Jefferson, President of the Worth County Ram Alumni Reunion (WCRAR), expressed appreciation on behalf of alumni traveling from across the globe – including California, Alaska, Kuwait, New York, Sweden, and South Korea – who look forward to the annual event. He thanked the city for its continued support and efforts in preparation for the occasion.

Acknowledging the financial strain of the city, Mr. Jefferson respectfully and humbly declined the proposed donation, stating, "*The alumni will support the alumni.*" He expressed gratitude to the alumni in attendance at the meeting and encouraged ongoing participation in future city council meetings.

Following further discussion, Mayor Pro-Tem Carter requested the records reflect a rescind the previously approved donation and upon a motion by Councilman Giddens, seconded by Councilman Powell, the City Council voted to rescind the \$4,000 donation to the Worth County Ram Alumni Reunion Association. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

New Business

A. Land Bank Property Discussion

City Manager Davis provided an update on the Land Bank Authority meeting held on August 6, 2025. Mr. Jackson, who has attended previous meetings, recommended Mr. Davis's participation of the recreated board. Staff presented a list of sixteen (16) city-owned properties for Council review. If approved, the properties will be submitted to the Land Bank Authority, which will accept bids and return them for tax generation.

Councilman Jackson enters at 6:16 p.m.

With additional discussion, it was noted that many listed parcels are small, under 0.5 acres, with no facilities, on landfill property, flood plain properties, but were presented to council for review. There was no action taken on this agenda item.

B. SPLOST 8 Project List

Mr. Davis reported his attendance at last week's SPLOST 8 (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) meeting with Worth County and the municipalities of Sumner, Warwick, and Poulan. The County plans to request \$10 million in federal funding, and each city, along with the County, must submit a list of proposed projects to be funded by SPLOST proceeds. Worth County will distribute sales tax revenues monthly.

Proposed projects include road, street, culvert, stormwater, traffic, curb and sidewalk improvements; technology and software upgrades for water meters; water, sewer, gas, and electric infrastructure; vehicle and equipment replacement; parks, cultural and recreational improvements; public safety capital equipment; and upgrades to the J.W. Holley School gym and grounds. These project types are consistent with those submitted under SPLOST 7 five years ago.

Attorney Castellow confirmed that the SPLOST 8 referendum will appear on the ballot this November. He advised that all approved project lists must be submitted to Worth County as soon as possible. To meet the deadlines required, a vote by the City Council is necessary during this meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Giddens, with Councilman Powell also in support, the SPLOST 8 Project List was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Reports/Remarks

Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1 – Councilman Powell requested a change in the order of the City Council remarks. He commended the Sylvester Police Department (SPD) for their strong presence during the first week of school and acknowledged the positive morale among City staff.

Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1 continued – Councilman Powell also raised concerns regarding blown transformers; staff is aware of the issues and is addressing them on a case-by-case basis; as for streetlight outages, the city is currently facing supply backorders. While outages are reported, replacements will occur once materials become available and with maintenance of stormwater canals, staff noted due to equipment failure. These concerns are shared, and the issues will be resolved as soon as machinery is repaired or purchased. He also commented on the impact of inflation and the rising costs of equipment and operations. He noted despite these challenges; the city has not raised utility rates and has absorbed the additional costs; and emphasized that it may now be necessary for the city to begin evaluating cost-saving measures and "tighten the belt."

Councilman J. Mark Giddens, Ward 3 – Councilman Giddens echoed appreciation for the outstanding work of the Sylvester Police Department (SPD), Sylvester Fire Department (SFD), and the Public Works Department, noting their continued dedication despite ongoing staffing shortages; also raised concerns regarding potholes along U.S. Highway 82. Public Works Director Greg Jackson confirmed that resurfacing work, led by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), is expected to begin soon.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2 – Councilman Jackson commended the Sylvester Police Department (SPD) for their vigilance and strong presence during the first week of school. He also praised the Public Works Department for their continued efforts in mowing and maintaining city grounds, despite recent rainy weather conditions.

Councilman Earnest Carter Jr., Ward 4 – Councilman Carter commended City employees for their continued hard work and dedication. He noted several potholes in need of repair and raised concerns about overgrown trees in the areas of Seabrook Drive and Kourtney Street, which may fall outside the City's right-of-way. Additionally, he reported multiple streetlights between Jeffords Park and McDonald's. As previously discussed, staff advised that replacement materials are currently in backorder.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. – Mayor Proctor also emphasized the importance of being good stewards of taxpayer dollars and expressed gratitude to the WCRAR for being self-sustaining, recognizing that the city sometimes needs support. He appreciated their bold and thoughtful decision to return the donation. He also thanked Councilman Carter for presiding over the meeting, in his first absence in four (4) years.

City Attorney Lester Castellow – Attorney Castellow had no report.

City Manager Chris Davis – Mr. Davis reminded all in attendance that the qualifying period for Mayor and Wards 3 and 4 will take place this week, Monday through Wednesday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at City Hall. He also noted that City Hall will be closed on Monday, September 1, in observance of Labor Day. Mr. Davis addressed the importance of being mindful of taxpayer dollars and emphasized efforts to reduce costs. He highlighted infrastructure challenges, including the use of aging vehicles and an outdated water and sewer system. The City is actively pursuing grants to fund upgrades such as the replacement of water meters and the repair or replacement of inoperable pumps.

City Manager Chris Davis continued – Mr. Davis also discussed ongoing issues at the Light Department, including the need to repair and replace transformers, increasing costs of necessary components, supply chain delays for bulbs and ballasts, and over two hundred (200) streetlights currently out across the city. Better inventory of poles, equipment and materials will help in the future. Staff were commended for their continued dedication, especially given the limitations of the current equipment. He noted the urgent need for industrial-grade equipment and noted plans are in place to implement cost-saving measures and prepare responsibly for the City's future needs.

Executive Session: None

Announcements: None

Adjournment

With all agenda items addressed, Councilman Jackson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilman Giddens. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson, and Powell. The motion passed unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

Mayor Proctor duly adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK