

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester

City Council Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

Monday, April 20, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Call to Order

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. called the meeting to order.

Attendees

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.

Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2

Councilman J. Mark Giddens, Ward 3

Councilman Nykemius J. Hamilton, Sr., Ward 4

City Manager Chris Davis

Assistant City Manager Richie Childers

Assistant City Manager Tanita Norris

City Attorney Lester Castellow

City Clerk Markesha Bivens

Invocation/Pledge

Dr. Willie Mae Marlin

Agenda

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, with second by Councilmen Hamilton and Powell combined, the meeting agenda was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, 5-0.

Speakers Appearance

Mr. Michael Johnson, Jr., Co-Founder of the On-Go-Elite Basketball Team, along with members of his staff, appeared before the Mayor and Council to request approval for the use of the Henry Hall Woolard Center for team practices. Mr. Johnson explained that the organization serves middle school-aged players from neighboring counties and that team members travel throughout Georgia and Florida to participate in competitive basketball tournaments. He stated that the organization is seeking a safe, indoor facility for practices and provided proof of liability insurance. Mr. Johnson further advised that he and his staff understand the Woolard Center hosts various activities and are willing to maintain a flexible practice schedule, should permission be granted. Mayor Proctor stated that the facility schedule would be reviewed and that staff would follow up regarding the request.

Ms. Sharon Lyles, representing CancerAwareness365, Inc., thanked the Mayor and Council for the City's support of the annual Pink Out Day event. She requested continued assistance with financial support and event logistics, advising that planning is underway for 2026, marking the event's 14th year. After further discussion, additional tents, volunteers, and mention of WALB Town & Country Show will help promote and increase community awareness took place.

Ms. Jinny Boyd, Special Projects Manager for the City of Sylvester, informed the Mayor and Council that the City has been awarded \$1,750,000 in GEFA Helene Resilience Funding, with 100% principal forgiveness, to support ditch and culvert repairs citywide. She also provided an update on the West Street Project in Ward 1, noting that it is in the preliminary phase with environmental review and driveway evaluations underway. The project is anticipated to begin in early 2027, per Keck & Wood Engineering Group.

New Business

A. Event Application: Punk in the Park

Mrs. Ebony Moore, Community Development Director, presented an event application submitted by Mr. Wesley Weaver for the Punk in the Park event, sponsored by Stay the Reason, a local rock band. The application requested use of the Jeffords Park stage and hut on July 11, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Following discussion, Council noted the anticipated attendance of approximately four hundred people and requested additional information. The panel agreed to table the application until a future meeting, so the applicant could be present to answer questions. No action was taken on the item.

B. Sylvester Woman's Club & Main Street: May Sip & Stroll

Mrs. Kristy Jordan, President of the Sylvester Woman's Club, appeared before the Mayor and Council to discuss partnering with the Main Street Department and Mrs. Karen Singletary for a Chalk Art Contest in conjunction with the May Sip and Stroll. The family-friendly event was proposed for May 8, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., with a children's contest on Liberty Avenue, with adults in the parking lot near Barnyard Creations, at Kelly Street and North Main Street. Mrs. Jordan advised that Family Connections would have a table and tent, with first, second, and third-place awards, along with a People's Choice Award presented. A temporary closure of Liberty Avenue was initially requested; however, following discussion, it was determined that a road closure may not be necessary.

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens and second by Councilman Jackson, the request to hold the Chalk Art Contest in conjunction with the May 2026 Sip and Stroll on May 8, 2026, was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, 5-0.

C. Resolution 2026-01: Georgia Cities Week

Mrs. Karen Singletary, Main Street Director, presented details of the annual Georgia Cities Week events and requested approval of Resolution 2026-01. Events scheduled include the Car Show, Employee Appreciation Lunch, Touch-a-Truck Event, Mock City Council Meeting with “If I Were Mayor” essays, Legislative Luncheon, Talent Show, and the Great Sylvester Clean-Up.

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens, seconded by Councilman Jackson, Resolution 2026-01: Georgia Cities Week was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, 5-0.

D. Alcoholic Beverage, License Applications

i. Beer, Wine, and Distilled Spirits Package Store: Slytown Package, LLC.

Mrs. Tenneisha Cushion, Deputy City Clerk, informed the Mayor and Council of the change in ownership of Pour House Liquor and presented an application for Slytown Package, LLC to sell beer, wine, and distilled spirits at the package store location. Mrs. Cushion advised that all application requirements had been satisfied and staff recommended approval.

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Giddens, the Mayor and Council approved the Beer, Wine, and Distilled Spirits Package Store application for Slytown Package, LLC. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

ii. Beer and Wine Grocery Store: Piggly Wiggly #137

Mrs. Tenneisha Cushion, Deputy City Clerk, informed the Mayor and Council of new management at Piggly Wiggly #137. She advised that all application requirements had been satisfied and staff recommended approval of the Beer and Wine Grocery Store Sales Beverage License Application for the existing grocery store location at 631 East Franklin Street, with no changes to the facility layout.

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens, seconded by Councilman Hamilton, the Mayor and Council approved the Beer and Wine Grocery Store Alcoholic Beverage License Application for Piggly Wiggly #137. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

E. Discussion: Alley Closure

Mrs. Ebony Moore, Community Development Director, presented a map illustrating an unopened alley located near Jerusalem Baptist Church between Anderson Street and West Crockett Street in Ward 1. She advised that the church would like to construct a kitchen addition and inquired about the possibility of alley abandonment should the City elect to move forward with the process.

City Attorney Lester Castellow explained that the alley abandonment process would require notification of adjacent property owners and publication of the required legal advertisement in the *Sylvester Local*. City Manager Chris Davis further stated that staff would review the location for any existing utilities and provide the findings to Attorney Castellow. Staff will present findings and recommendations regarding the proposed abandonment at a future Council meeting.

F. Discussion: Best Friends Humane Society Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Jason Orr, President of the Best Friends Humane Society, presented an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for consideration, requesting an increase of \$1,682.24 to the animal control budget for the 2026–2027 Fiscal Year. He noted that the approximate 2% increase is considered reasonable for both the County and municipalities, based on employee salaries, number of animals rescued, facility operating costs, veterinary expenses, and overall cost of living increases.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Councilman Giddens and seconded jointly by Councilmen Hamilton and Powell to approve the requested animal control budget increase and authorize execution of the proposed MOU with Best Friends Humane Society. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

G. Resolution 2026-02: Sylvester Utilities Bucket Truck

City Manager Chris Davis informed the Mayor and Council that one Utilities Department one (1) bucket truck has been taken out of service, and another may soon be unavailable due to safety concerns and pending repairs in Atlanta. He noted the department is currently operating with only one (1) truck, which impacts storm restoration and service reliability.

Mr. Davis advised that, after review by the Utilities and Finance Departments, purchasing used equipment was not feasible, and new bucket trucks range from \$300,000 to \$400,000. Staff identified an Altec bucket truck available through a Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) low-interest financing program for \$260,000. Staff requested authorization for Mayor Proctor to execute the resolution for purchase, consistent with prior equipment financing approvals for the Sylvester Fire Department Aerial Truck.

Upon motion by Councilman Powell and second by Councilman Jackson, Resolution 2026-02 for the Utilities Bucket Truck was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, 5-0.

H. Margaret Jones Public Library Fiscal Year 2026-2027

City Manager Chris Davis presented details of the Margaret Jones Public Library's Fiscal Year 2026–2027 budget. Library Director Leigh Wiley submitted a budget narrative noting that a \$3,000 increase would offset anticipated increases in employee health insurance and retirement costs. Supporting documentation was provided in the agenda packet for Mayor and Council review prior to the meeting.

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens, seconded jointly by Councilmen Jackson and Powell, the request to approve a \$3,000 budget increase for the Margaret Jones Public Library was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Reports/Remarks

Councilman J. Mark Giddens had no report.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr. requested that Code Enforcement inspect the property located at 207 Peachtree Street in Ward 2, noting that the home has remained in a burned condition for more than ten years and the lot has become overgrown. He also inquired about the status of speed bump reinstallation on Henderson Street. The street has been submitted for repaving and residents have contacted him regarding the speed bumps, which were recently removed during utility pipe work.

Councilman Melvin Powell asked for an update on storm debris removal in Ward 1. He noted that a large debris pile remains and asked about the status of the cleanup.

Councilman Nykemius J. Hamilton, Sr. stated that the speed bumps on Welch Street have been effective in reducing speeding. He also reported a complaint regarding trash accumulation near the WorthMor Mobile Home Park on Bridges Street and requested Code Enforcement review the area for possible illegal dumping, along with consideration of additional monitoring or enforcement measures.

City Attorney Lester Castellow had no report.

City Manager Chris Davis reported that speed bumps removed during construction will be reinstalled upon completion of repaving projects. He advised that most storm debris has been collected and reimbursement documentation has been submitted. Mr. Davis noted that the grapple truck is currently under repair; however, staff will utilize a backhoe and dump truck to complete remaining cleanup in Ward 1. He also reported that Public Works has addressed trash concerns on Bridges Street following site inspections, noting ongoing resident clean-out activity, and emphasizing property owner responsibility. Mr. Davis provided an update on the Senior Citizen Trip scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, 2026, with departure at 9:00 a.m. from the Mary Alice Shipp Center to Valdosta Mall, followed by lunch at Old Times Restaurant. Additionally, he reported that pavilions at Jeffords Park and Pope Park have been installed, with cost savings reported on the project. Trash cans and picnic tables are forthcoming, and the Jeffords Park site was elevated to address drainage concerns. Streetlight repairs requested by Councilman Powell have been completed. He also proposed that budget work sessions and public hearings be scheduled for May 18, June 1, and June 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. during regularly scheduled Council meetings to allow time for review and adoption by the end of June.

Lastly, City Manager Chris Davis discussed current water tap fees, noting that approximately 99% of new water meters have been installed. He stated that fees associated with new water and sewer connections do not currently cover the City's costs, as the existing \$700 tap fee inside city limits does not account for manpower and equipment expenses. Staff recommended increasing tap fees to \$1,200 for new customers to better cover installation costs, in comparison to neighboring communities. He advised that staff would provide additional information to the Mayor and Council for further review and consideration.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. had no report.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment

With all agenda items addressed, Councilman Jackson moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded conjoined by Councilmen Hamilton and Powell. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Mayor Proctor adjourned the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

ATTEST:

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK