

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester

City Council Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

Monday, May 4, 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. Mack Park, a Sylvester resident, addressed the Mayor and City Council regarding the RedSpeed cameras operating within the community. He expressed concerns that the company is based in Chicago, Illinois, is not locally owned, and operates on a for-profit basis. Mr. Park stated that his primary concern was ensuring that the program's focus remains on public safety and speed reduction.

Mr. Tracy Gray, a Worth County resident, also addressed the Mayor and City Council regarding the RedSpeed cameras. He expressed concerns about the information being collected, how it may be shared or sold, and how long vehicle information is kept. He also commented on whether information about vehicles and individuals who had not committed any violations could be shared with other agencies.

Ms. Sharri Twyman, a Sylvester resident and Director of Albany Municipal Court, expressed her opposition to the RedSpeed cameras. She stated some drivers who knowingly speed, submit an affidavit for citation dismissal. She also mentioned concerns about the company's customer service, in which vehicle owners, the court system, and the elderly have trouble with assistance. Ms. Twyman further noted that legislative changes are possible in the future, and she supports the use of red-light cameras for safety purposes.

Mr. Johnny Barfield, a Worth County resident, addressed the Mayor and City Council to express discontent with RedSpeed cameras. He shared his experience challenging a citation that he stated was issued outside of the school zone enforcement hours. Mr. Barfield stated that he was informed he would need to appear before a judge and described the appeal process as lengthy and time-consuming. He also referenced House Bill 225 and the issues and unknown details on this topic. He also expressed concerns that the program places too much emphasis on generating revenue rather than protecting children in school zones. Mr. Barfield further noted that the cameras have caused frustration among members of the community.

Mr. Josh Wadkins, a Sylvester resident, spoke in opposition to the RedSpeed school zone cameras. He referenced action by the Georgia House of Representatives regarding automated school zone speed enforcement cameras and expressed concerns about their impact on the community. Mr. Wadkins stated that, since 2024, more than 90,000 vehicle registrations have reportedly been placed on hold due to unpaid citations issued through school zone speed cameras, creating a financial burden for many.

Ms. Valorie Jones, a Sylvester resident, expressed opposition to the RedSpeed school zone cameras. She shared her family's experience and stated that she did not support the cameras. Ms. Jones also expressed her opinion that there should be other ways to fund police officers instead of installing the cameras.

New Business

A. Georgia Peanut Festival Committee

Mr. Robert Frock, Georgia Peanut Festival Chairman, requested permission to install the Peanut Festival banners along city highways in mid-August, earlier than in previous years, and mentioning the current banners are in poor condition. He also discussed improved lighting for the entertainment area, similar to the Christmas lighting display at Jeffords Park, to be installed in late October.. and requested a lighting setup similar to the Christmas lights at Jeffords Park in late October. Public safety concerns, renting portable lights and workload of the Utilities Department were also discussed, with a request to meet with Utilities Director Tyree McGee to explore solutions soon, and to be tabled until the meeting takes place.

Councilman Giddens made a motion to approve the request for installation of the signs for the Peanut Festival in mid-August. The motion was seconded by Councilman Jackson and approved unanimously. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, with a 5-0 vote.

B. Worth County Chamber of Commerce

Mrs. Kayla Myers, President and CEO of the Sylvester-Worth County Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Mayor and Council to provide an update on Chamber activities and upcoming events. She introduced the newly created Agritourism Committee, which will focus on promoting agricultural opportunities throughout the county and municipalities, including projects such as the Village Community Garden. Mrs. Myers announced the upcoming Business After Hours event at RV South on May 7 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and invited Council members to attend. She also shared information regarding the May 21 *Know Her Worth* Women's Leadership event and encouraged participation from local women leaders. Mrs. Myers provided an update on increased Chamber involvement with Main Street events, including Sip and Stroll, noting that Chamber staff will be more actively engaged in the community alongside Main Street Director Karen Singletary. She also discussed the Government Tour program and provided information to City Clerk Markesha Bivens for future scheduling. Mrs. Myers thanked the City for its continued partnership and provided an update on the upcoming Chamber Rodeo planned for February 2027. She advised that the Chamber plans to seek support from the Cities and County, including assistance with portable lighting (as previously mentioned), restroom facilities, and bleachers, noting that the City of Sylvester has helped with these items in the past. She also discussed additional ways to support the event, including monetary contributions and community awareness.

C. Discussion: Sylvester Police Department with RedSpeed Cameras

Chief Ronald Jackson of the Sylvester Police Department addressed the Mayor and Council regarding the proposed RedSpeed Cameras, based in North Georgia. Following the public comments and concerns expressed earlier in the meeting, Chief Jackson emphasized that the primary purpose of the cameras is to enhance public safety rather than generate revenue. He addressed questions regarding speed limits, citations, and data collection, noting that the data collected would be similar to the Flock cameras currently in use throughout the City. Chief Jackson stated that it would be better to have the cameras available to help prevent or address a serious accident than to not have them and wish they had been installed later. He further explained that the proposal was brought before the Council due to ongoing staffing shortages within the Police Department.

Chief Jackson presented school zone traffic statistics, discussed staffing shortages, and highlighted the potential use of cameras and drones as additional public safety tools. He noted that, if installed, the cameras could be removed within 30 days should they fail to meet the City's expectations. Discussion also included potential camera locations, time stamp accuracy, support from the Superintendent of Schools, previous police presence in school zones, and clarification of the information available through the Flock camera system, including vehicle registration, license plate data, insurance status, driver's license status, and stolen vehicle alerts.

Councilman Powell moved to approve the installation of RedSpeed cameras in school zones, seconded by Mayor Proctor. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilman Powell. Voting in opposition were Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, and Jackson. The motion failed by a vote of 3-2.

Reports/Remarks

Councilman Nykemius J. Hamilton, Sr. had no report.

Councilman J. Mark Giddens advised that tree limbs and debris remain following the Ward 3 alley cleanup and requested removal.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr. had no report.

Councilman Melvin Powell requested an update on the paving project and a copy of the list of Ward 4 streets identified for resurfacing. He also inquired about the streetlight installation at the corner of Sutton Street and Lee Street.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. discussed the need for portable restrooms at Pope Park and additional restroom facilities at Jeffords Park. He noted that increased use of the ball fields and playground equipment is expected to increase park activity and that he observed higher park usage between 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

City Attorney Lester Castellow provided an update on the dark fiber network agreement with the Worth County School System. He advised that the City previously provided quotes but missed an opportunity during the bidding process. Draft agreements have been prepared to resolve the matter, including reimbursement for billing, with new contracts expected within the next few months.

City Manager Chris Davis advised that the Public Works Department is awaiting delivery of the paving machine and plans to resume work next week. He reminded Council that alleys and parking lots are not eligible for LMIG funding and will provide Councilman Powell with the list of streets submitted over the past two years. He also reminded the Mayor and Council of the Hazard Mitigation Kickoff Meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Worth County Community Center.

Additional Comments:

Mr. Greg Jackson, Public Works Director, provided an update on the paving project and advised that work will resume once the equipment arrives. Bryant Drive will be the starting point.

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 by Councilman Hamilton. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, 5-0.

Mayor Proctor adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

ATTEST:

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK