

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester

City Council Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

Monday, July 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 (via phone)

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 a request to remove Item VII: New Business, B. ii., Ross Wings to Go, from the agenda, Councilman Giddens made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Councilman Jackson seconded the motion. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Presentation - Councilman J. Mark Giddens Achievement

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. presented Councilman J. Mark Giddens with a Certificate of Recognition from the Harold F. Holtz Municipal Training Institute in recognition of his successful completion of the required training hours and classes, including the Newly Elected Officials Training.

Speakers Appearance

Mr. Ben Barbee, recently appointed Interim Worth County Administrator, reintroduced himself to the Mayor and Council. He shared his 14 years of experience as Chief Appraiser in the Tax Assessor's Office and noted 28 years of service with Worth County. With recent personnel changes and the untimely passing of Worth County Board of Commissioners Chairman Fred Dent, Mr. Barbee stated that he is reaching out to the municipalities as Mrs. Shannon Merritt is currently serving as Chief Appraiser. Mr. Barbee expressed his desire for Worth County and municipalities to work together and stated that his office is always open and available to assist.

Public Hearing

The Public Hearing was called to order at 6:07 p.m. upon motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Hamilton. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion passed, 5-0.

All required advertising and public notice requirements were met, and no public comments were received regarding the following three Public Hearings:

A. Applicant: City of Sylvester
Request: Amend Chapter 10-Alcoholic Beverages, Section 10-6 Hours of Operation

The purpose of the Public Hearing was to consider an amendment to Chapter 10 – Alcoholic Beverages, Section 10-6 – Hours of Operation, requiring any establishment licensed for on-premises consumption of distilled spirits or alcoholic beverages to close at 2:00 a.m.

Concerns were expressed regarding why certain establishments (restaurants) that sell alcohol for on-premises consumption are permitted to remain open later than other establishments (clubs and game rooms). The proposed amendment would establish a uniform closing time of 2:00 a.m. for all establishments licensed to sell alcohol for on-premises consumption.

The Planning Commission recommends approving this amendment.

Mayor and Council Remarks

With clarification requested regarding weekend sales, it was explained that the proposed amendment would only change the required closing time for establishments and under the amendment, all businesses licensed to sell alcohol for on-premises consumption would be required to close at 2:00 a.m.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Upon a motion from Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Hamilton, the amendment to Chapter 10 – Alcoholic Beverages, Section 10-6 – Hours of Operation was approved by **Ordinance 2026-01**. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion passed, 5-0.

B. Applicant: City of Sylvester
Request: Amend Chapter 94 of the Zoning Ordinance by Adding Section 94-15 Mandatory Inspections for Long-Term/Inactive Services

The purpose of the Public Hearing was to consider an amendment to Chapter 94 – Utilities, requiring inspections of long-term inactive utility services to ensure compliance with current safety standards prior to reconnection.

The Planning Commission recommends approval of the proposed changes.

Mayor and Council Remarks

Discussion included safety concerns, current requirements for rental properties, the length of time utilities may remain inactive, certified electrician inspections, and requirements for residential and commercial properties. Temporary and permanent utility services, applicable fees, state law, and requirements in neighboring communities were also discussed.

Attorney Castellow reviewed **Ordinance 2026-02**, Mandatory Inspection for Long-Term/Inactive Utilities, and recommended clarifying that the six (6) month period refers to six (6) consecutive months.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Upon a motion from Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Hamilton, the amendment to Chapter 94 of the Zoning Ordinance by adding Section 94-15 for Mandatory Inspections for Long-Term/Inactive Services was approved by **Ordinance 2026-02**. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion passed, unanimously, 5-0.

C. Applicant: City of Sylvester
Request: Rezoning of Parcel SV090103 from R1-A to R1

The Council considered a request to rezone 6.53 acres on Miles Street (Parcel No. SV090103) from R-1A to R-1 for residential development. The applicant submitted the application on May 24, 2026, following a survey completed on May 4, 2024, noting that incorrect zoning information had been originally provided to the owner at the time of the survey. Approval would allow the parcel from large-lot R-1A rules to standard R-1 regulations. This allows for a more compact layout with a 7,500-square-foot minimum lot size, 20-foot front and rear building setbacks, and 8-foot side setbacks.

The Planning Commission had previously denied the variance for rezoning.

Mayor and Council Remarks

Following discussion, the City Council determined that more information, a visual layout, and the attendance of the property owner, Mr. Hal Carter, are required before a final decision can be made. No formal action was taken on the zoning amendment itself.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Giddens, the Public Hearing was closed, and the request and application were tabled until the August 3, 2026, Council Meeting. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion passed, 5-0.

The Public Hearing adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

Unfinished Business

Recreational Vehicles Ordinance

Upon directive from a previous council meeting, City Staff presented a draft ordinance for consideration regarding a revision to the Recreational Vehicle Ordinance to noting All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs). City Manager Chris Davis read the proposed ordinance into the record, highlighting key components including specific definitions for approved vehicles, age restrictions, and licensing requirements for operators and designates streets. The ordinance also outlines standard safety equipment and operational functions for each vehicle, details for mandatory safety inspections by the Sylvester Police Department, and procedures for obtaining registration decals and paying associated fees at Customer Service, as well as established penalties for violations. Plans to notify citizens via social media and the city's website, as well as a 30-day trial period were discussed.

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Giddens, the revision to the Recreational Vehicle Ordinance was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, 5-0.

New Business

A. Rams Learning Launchpad Afterschool Initiative

Mrs. Sandra Anderson, Worth County native and educator at Worth County Elementary School, addressed Mayor and Council regarding a proposed after-school initiative, the Rams Learning Launchpad. She stated that the program would provide academic support, enrichment activities, and a safe environment for students in grades 2–5 during the school year, Monday through Thursday, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Mrs. Anderson advised that she is currently exploring community partnerships, facility options, and grant funding opportunities.

Following discussion, Mayor and Council expressed support for the vision and recognized the need for such a program in the community. However, concerns were discussed regarding the availability of City facilities due to previous requests from nonprofit organizations. Mrs. Anderson was encouraged to consult with the Worth County Board of Education regarding potential facility options for the program. Mayor and Council agreed to provide a letter of support for the initiative. No action was taken.

B. Alcoholic Beverage License Application

i. Whistle Convenience Store with Gas Pumps

Mrs. Tenneisha Cushion, Deputy City Clerk, offered details of the Alcoholic Beverage License Application by the owner of the Whistle Convenience Store with Gas Pumps. Staff seeks approval of this application, with all documentation completed and fees paid as required for the sale of beer and wine at 308 W. Franklin Street.

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Hamilton, the Alcoholic Beverage License Application for the Whistle Convenience Store with Gas Pumps was approved. Voting in favor were Mayor Proctor and Councilmen Giddens, Hamilton, Jackson, and Powell. The motion carried, 5-0.

~~ii. Ross Wings to Go~~

Reports/Remarks

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

Councilman J. Mark Giddens had no report.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr. reported that a manhole lid near the Henry Hall Woolard Center had been removed and needs to be replaced or secured. He also reported that the roof has been leaking and causing water to enter the building. Public Works has been notified, and due to the age of the building, further inspection is recommended. Councilman Jackson noted the need to update the inventory of tables and chairs available for rental facilities following an incident involving a family reunion this past weekend when tables and chairs were unavailable. Staff is aware of the need to update the rental inventory for each facility and is in the process of making the necessary changes. He also reported that the Flock camera installed in Ward 2 has been effective, with noise levels appearing to have decreased since its installation.

Councilman Melvin Powell inquired about the hours of operation for the Customer Service Drive-Thru at the Train Depot. Mrs. Cushion confirmed that there has been no change in hours, which are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with extended convenience hours until 5:00 p.m. during inclement weather.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. revisited the installing of Flock cameras in the community to the concerns citizens had with installing new red speed cameras at a past council meeting. High crime areas, speeding, and public safety were all mentioned.

City Attorney Lester Castellow had no report.

City Manager Chris Davis responded to Mayor Proctor's request to revisit the comparison of Flock and RedSpeed cameras. He stated that, due to a misunderstanding regarding the time and concerns related to school-zone public safety and traffic, the item should not have been placed on the agenda but should have been at the discretion of Police Chief Ronald Jackson. Mr. Davis also mentioned the Worth County Rams Football Team sponsorship request, with details available for review, and reminded Mayor and Council that documents requiring signatures would be placed with Ms. Bivens at the conclusion of the meeting.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Announcements

Mrs. Connie Collier inquired about the white lines on the road in Ward 1. It was explained that surveying for fiber installation is taking place and that the lines mark utilities in the area.

Adjournment

With all agenda items addressed, Councilman Giddens moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilman Jackson. 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