



CITY OF MABLETON, GEORGIA

Riverside EpiCenter
135 Riverside Pkwy, Austell, GA 30168
September 8, 2025 at 6:30 PM

The Honorable Michael Owens, Mayor
The Honorable Ron Davis, District 1 Councilmember
The Honorable Dami Oladapo, District 2 Councilmember
The Honorable Keisha Jeffcoat, Mayor Pro Tem/District 3 Councilmember
The Honorable Patricia Auch, District 4 Councilmember
The Honorable TJ Ferguson, District 5 Councilmember
The Honorable Debora Herndon, District 6 Councilmember

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Owens called the meeting to order at 6:41 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Hiott conducted the roll call. All Mayor and Council were present.

3. INVOCATION

City Manager Bill Tanks led the invocation.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Owens led the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. AGENDA ITEMS AND DISCUSSION

a. Code Enforcement Department Update February 2025 through August 2025 - Director of Code Enforcement Alejandro Ferrell

Mayor Owens recognized Director of Code Enforcement Alejandro Ferrell who provided the presentation. The power point is available in the agenda packet.

Mr. Ferrell addressed the Code Enforcement Department's mission and why Code Enforcement is important because it provides an improved quality of life for all stakeholders. He reported on the statuses of cases from February to August 2025 including total complaints, in progress, in compliance and non-compliant.

Mayor Owens and Councilmember Ferguson asked questions about the details and highlights of the statuses. Mayor Owens asked how the cases were coming into the department. Mr. Ferrell explained a 4-1 ratio of complaints, and he named the type of cases the enforcement officers looked for, such as grass, trash, cars parked in the yard, inoperative vehicles. Councilmember Ferguson referenced the complaint about a business operating in a parking lot and the question was if there was a business license. Mr. Ferrell reported in more detail about the incident. Mr. Ferguson stressed those types of cases should be highlighted in the reports. Mr. Ferrell continued to explain how the most

commonly reported complaints revolve around tall weeds and grass, abandoned vehicles, as well as outdoor storage, which impact neighborhood aesthetics and safety.

Questions and discussion continued about the grass issues. Mayor Owens commented about having priorities. Councilmember Ferguson commented about properties he had seen with tall grass and five cars parked in the grass with an engine pulled out of the car. Mayor Owens asked if the cases could be broken down by district and types of violations. Mr. Ferrell stated he could do that type of report. Mayor Owens expressed his interest in hot spots and trends as the department works to not only clean up the issues, but also prevent future issues. Mr. Ferrell explained the strategy to break down statistics into the trouble-type offenders. Mr. Ferrell pointed out that District 1 and 3 receive the biggest number of complaints. Councilmember Jeffcoat addressed whether there was adequate staff to support the workload.

Per additional questions by Councilmember Ferguson, Mr. Ferrell explained how notices and citations were different. Mr. Tanks provided an additional explanation of how the Code Enforcement Department was in an educational phase, and as the Department comes out of the education and awareness phases, the City will evolve to provide the adjudication process as the Court is up and running. Citations can be issued now. Councilmember Ferguson expressed the importance that people understood the work that the Code Enforcement Department was doing. People need to adhere to and listen to the work outlined by this department. The City was getting to the point of having a court. Mayor Owens stressed that the goal and plan from the very beginning was to have a Code Enforcement Department to conduct an education period long before having a court system. The City was on plan and schedule. As far as how the City was going to set up services and open buildings, the City is going as planned. He continued to explain how the Code Enforcement process builds a case history. Code Enforcement is not just for citing people, but it is to ensure quality of life. Mr. Tanks commented on how the adjudication process is for those that have been educated, warned, and have not respected the system.

b. Riverside Properties Update as requested by Mayor and Council - Code Enforcement Director Alejandro Ferrell assisted by Chief Building Official Marcus Robinson

Mayor Owens acknowledged the next agenda item and City Manager Tanks stated the Mayor and Council asked for an update on actions taken regarding the Riverside Properties. Code Enforcement Director Al Ferrell and Chief Building Official Marcus Robinson proceed to give an update. Mayor Owens added that there are a lot of emails and comments that occur, and the Council as a whole did not know about all of them. He specifically wanted the staff to report on what was going on so that everyone knew all the work that had occurred.

Code Enforcement Ferrell provided background about the Riverside Properties. The presentation is available in the record.

Highlights of the presentation:

- Many of the issues found related to several properties along Riverside Parkway for years prior to the City of Mableton being incorporated.
- In March 2025, the City of Mableton began code enforcement and building

inspection services.

- In January 2025, the only Code Enforcement staff member at that time, Director Ferrell visited some of the locations.
- The Code Enforcement Department found that the properties in question were owned by an out-of-state investor in New York.
- The Director reached out to the owner of the corporation in April-May 2025 after code enforcement services were transferred from the County to the City.
- The company did contact the City of Mableton to confirm the properties were in receivership which were transferred to Trigild in June 2025.
- Code Enforcement Department and Economic Development Department met with the Regional Property Manager for the new owners and discussed their plans as well as addressed code complaints received from residents including rodents, open ceilings in common breezeways, and swimming pool maintenance and property maintenance to include landscaping. Notice of violations were issued.

Mr. Ferrell reported on the actions: (Specific details are listed in the PowerPoint.)

- The new owners agreed to provide weekly updates to the Code Enforcement Department.
- Bids are requested to repair the pools instead of covering them up.
- Landscaping and carpet installation updates were in place.
- Boarding up of specific buildings will start once residents are transferred.
- Fire inspections are underway.
- Pest control is underway.

Mr. Ferrell continued to report on the actions taken by the City of Mableton Code Enforcement.

Councilmember Jeffcoat referenced complaints and previous discussions with property owners and asked if there were any specific dates that pending items would be completed. Mr. Ferrell explained how the bids must be received, and then the lenders have to approve.

Mr. Ferrell continued to explain the landlords' reactions and processes following the City's inquiries and inspections (updates are named in the PowerPoint presentation in the record). He ended the report by summarizing that the Code Enforcement strategy will be to conduct random multifamily sweeps and address exterior code violations and to continue to address code violations from residents as those complaints are reported to the department. He asked if there were any questions.

Councilmember Oladapo commended Mr. Ferrell for his department's hard work. She asked about the residences and those units that are not in great habitual condition. Mr. Ferrell reported they were supposed to be boarding them up. Cobb County has done No Trespassing to get rid of unwanted individuals. The plan is to board up and move tenants to other properties if they desire. They have to secure the buildings. Discussion continued.

Mr. Ferrell recognized Chief Building Official Marcus Robinson who provided additional

updates.

Chief Building Official Marcus Robinson presented an update on the Riverside properties.

Chief Building Official Robinson stated the mission of his department: The City of Mableton Building Division's mission is to enforce construction codes and standards to facilitate economic growth, protecting the safety, health, and general welfare of the public from hazards attributed to the built environment sustainably.

Mr. Robinson reported on the Riverside Properties Fire on August 18, 2025, at 3:45 a.m. No electricity was connected and six were displaced. It was investigated as arson. The PowerPoint presentation is available in the agenda packet. Photos were shown with descriptions of the damage. Highlights of the building inspection report was addressed and the importance of securing the building and being safe were also addressed. The burned building was unsafe.

Mr. Robinson addressed the Building Code Violations under the International Property Maintenance Code (IMPC) 2018. He spoke about the unsafe buildings of Riverside Apartments inspected and the importance of inspections to get a occupation tax. Councilmember Ron Davis commented about the inspection program. Because they have not been inspected is why they become unsafe. He asked how a unit gets to that point. It was great to keep that happening in the future. It is difficult for staff to look at all apartments, so the owners must hire a third-party inspection company.

City Manager Tanks commented additionally that Code Enforcement alone is not the answer. When the City has an ordinance, and the building inspections piece, the license can be pulled. Pretty soon, because of the ordinance that was passed, the City could make it more painful for slumlords. The code enforcement, ordinance, building inspections, court system are tools to use. Mayor Owens affirmed that the owner will pay for the inspections. Mr. Robinson and Mr. Tanks continued to explain the importance of the inspection process. There was discussion about the outsourcing of inspections vs in-house.

c. Update on Building Division - Chief Building Official Marcus Robinson

Chief Building Official Marcus Robinson provided an update on the Building Division. The presentation is available in the agenda packet.

(Clerk's note: Councilmember Ferguson was not present during some of the previous reports. He was not present at 7:45 pm)

Highlights of the presentation:

- Mission statement - The Building Division's mission is to enforce construction codes and standards to facilitate economic growth, protecting the safety, health, and general welfare of the public from hazards attributed to the built environment sustainably.
- Mr. Robinson spoke about his experience and said he was proud serve the City of Mableton. Mr. Tanks asked Mr. Robinson to report that there are only two African American municipal certified Chief Building Officials in Georgia, and he was one

of the two.

- Mr. Robinson spoke about his team of supervisor and two building inspectors. There will be a permit coordinator.
- Mr. Robinson spoke about the purpose and background of the department and the initial needs for the department.
- The permitting system, Cloud Permit, was described.
- Other items addressed included customer service experience, ongoing changes and improvements, technology update, economic development through permitting, performance metrics, and building service levels.

Mr. Robinson highlighted that the residential reviews are completed in five days or less. Building inspections are completed in 24 hours.

Additional information about the Building Division is located in the PowerPoint presentation in the agenda packet.

Mr. Robinson and Mayor Owens asked if there were any questions. There was none.

d. Mableton Municipal Court Update — 60 Days In Review - Court Administrator Mallory Minor

Mayor Owens announced the item and recognized Court Administrator Mallory Minor who provided a 60-day review of the pre-implementation and implementation phases of the Municipal Court. The memo dated September 8, 2025 is available in the agenda packet.

Highlights of the review included:

- Selecting court management software and contractual probation services.
- Establishing a virtual online court platform and mailing address.
- Actively working toward GCIC (Georgia Crime Information Center) compliance to uphold the highest standards of legal data management. To obtain LASO designation.
- Hiring a Deputy Municipal Court Clerk and interviewing for other key positions.
- The Chief Judge appoints the Municipal Court Clerk.
- Submitting architectural plans for the Municipal Court Annex.
- Preparing for the formal appointment of the Chief Judge and City Solicitor.
- Collaborating with the City Manager's Office and Finance Department to allocate funds for the selection of a Public Defender, ensuring all residents have access to legal representation

Other comments:

- Ms. Minor will be back next month to give a report.
- She wanted to make sure to educate the City and the public.
- The selection of the Court seal is to be announced.
- She is a stickler when it comes to policy.
- She addressed the need for having one centralized zip code that helps court and

officers.

- She was working with the Sheriff's Department regarding fingerprinting to ensure she could execute any warrants.
- She will bring before the Mayor and Council a municipal court fee and fines schedule.
- There will be the adoption of uniform rules of the municipal court by Council.

Councilmember Oladapo asked for a timeline of when the Court will be ready. Mr. Tanks stated March 2026. The City has to go through permitting, engineers, electrical planning, and in consideration of the holiday season. Ms. Minor has eluded having a virtual court and she is wisely working on that.

Mayor Owens asked if the work had been budgeted and approved. Mr. Tanks anticipates setting aside \$400,000 for facility renovations, including the Court and Suite 136. The City will have a quarterly report coming in October. This year, the City should get insurance payments. He believes the City will continue to show it is fiscally sound, still taking in more than spending, with a well established fund balance. Once the City receives the final cost, he may come back after November for budget amendments if necessary. The City is financially prepared, but may require moving funds from one account to another.

Councilmember Auch asked about her plans or strategy for getting zip codes to match in certain areas. Ms. Minor explained how she plans to present it to the post office. Correspondence must be written to the USPS. Mayor Owens reported that this request has been going on for some time. The City has addressed the postmaster, senator, and others. He asked about the challenges of not having a unified zip code. Discussion followed about how the court software system would send out the mail and identify the proper addresses. City Attorney Walker-Ashby commented further about previously working with the Federal Government and United Post Office. They are cooperative but stern about conducting certain processes. The process takes about two years, and noting she was being very generous with that prediction.

e. Mableton Municipal Court - Judicial Correction Services, LLC Contract for Probation Services - Court Administrator Mallory Minor

Mayor Owens acknowledged the next item and Court Administrator Mallory Minor provided background.

The contract is for probation services. The agreement is authorized under O.C.G.A. 42-8-101 to provide professional probation supervision, rehabilitation services, and sentencing alternatives. The Chief Judge of the Municipal Court must give his consent. The contract is to be on the September 24, 2025 agenda. She continued to give an overview of the contract.

The probation company is well known in the State of Georgia.

Questions and discussion ensued. Councilmember Auch asked about the appointment of the Chief Judge.

City Manager Tanks explained how Mayor Owens appoints the chief justice and the Council to approve. There are recommendations from the Mayor's office and background and screening are to take place. Discussion followed about the timeline for signing the contract in conjunction with the appointment of the judge.

City Attorney Walker-Ashby Emilia commented about the process of appointing the judge and adopting the judges' contract. It is preferred to negotiate the judges' contract before appointment. As far as the Judicial Correction Services contract, the contract will be approved after the appointment of the judge.

f. Mableton Municipal Court - JusticeOne Contract for Court Case Management Software - Court Administrator Mallory Minor

Mayor Owens announced the next item — JusticeOne Contract for Court Case Management and recognized Ms. Minor who provide background.

Ms. Minor reported the premier software is fully integrated with the court payment processing solution in real time. She explained why the software was unique and a single source. There has NCIC Integration. There is a virtual court capability. Also, JusticeOne Court supports direct integration with Georgia state reporting systems. Data is easily submitted to the state with a few clicks.

Questions and discussion ensued:

- Ms. Minor addressed the procurement process with Purchasing and Finance. The estimated cost is \$2,600 monthly fee or \$31,200 annually.
- The cost is a good price since there is not going to be any integration of other software.
- It will only take 35-40 days to implement the court system.
- There was discussion about having cloud-based vs server.
- There was discussion about JCS does not have a portal for the Court. They have their own program. There is no integration with their software. They will conduct monthly updates and reports.

g. Alternative methods for presenting information regarding requests for rezoning and other entitlement cases - Community Development Director Michael Hughes

Mayor Owens announced item and recognized Community Development Director Michael Hughes who provided options for presenting information regarding rezoning and other entitlement cases.

Mr. Hughes presented options.

Community Development will schedule zoning cases for the hearings with a separate work session.

- Option 1 - This will allow work session presentation on Monday night with applicants and staff. This is information and questions and answers.
- This application will then be scheduled for a hearing in the two weeks out Wednesday night. This was his recommendation.

Option 2 - Add a separate meeting dedicated to zoning and community development cases.

- Example third week of the month. His recommendation was an optional quarterly meeting with the district council person and community development staff to discuss.

Mr. Tanks explained the recommendations were in response to some of the councilmembers being uncomfortable with the amount of information on a previous agenda

related to land issues where they had to vote.

Per questions by Councilmember Auch, discussion followed about if decide on Option 1, the Monday night's agenda would be tempered to allow time for the zoning cases review. Mr. Hughes stated he recommended Option 1.

There was discussion about the screens and that items could not be seen on the smaller screens. Council asked if the City could use Zoom. There was discussion about the timeline in conjunction with Planning Commission meetings and getting the information in plenty of time for renewal. Mayor and Council agreed there was a need for more training about planning.

City Clerk Hiott reminded Council can always look at the Mableton.gov website, and on the board portal. Community Development is placing the information for public view and board view in a timely manner.

Direction - Mayor and Council gave direction to provide additional training on zoning as soon as possible. Mr. Hughes will work toward having a Zoning training session on an upcoming Saturday. The Zoning cases are to be placed on the Council's Monday work session for review. The information is also available under the Planning Commission's agenda for review. This depends on volume.

h. City Council Newsletter Options-Gregory Woods, Director of Communications

Mayor Owens recognized Director of Communications Gregory Woods who addressed email newsletter platforms. A survey of surrounding jurisdictions shows a mix of Constant Contact, Mailchimp, and Granicus/GovDelivery. Mr. Woods led in a PowerPoint presentation which is available in the agenda packet.

Highlights of the presentation:

- The survey results of the cities were shown.
- Mailchimp - \$5,400 annually.
- Constant Contact - \$8,820 annually.
- Staff recommends adoption of Mailchimp as the City Council newsletter platform due to lower cost and existing use within the city.
- Two scenarios to be considered for newsletter implementation:
 - 1. Each Council Member drafts their own quarterly newsletter, with support from the Executive Assistant to Council Staff and the Department of Communications' graphic designer.
 - 2. Council approves the addition of a dedicated writer in the Department of Communications to manage all newsletters.

Questions and discussion followed.

- Councilmember Oladapo thought another Executive Assistant could help with the drafting of the newsletters.
- Mr. Tanks addressed the budgeting process for adding staff additions which happens during the meeting and budgeting phases. Mayor and Council will have to

prioritize staffing needs.

- Councilmember Oladapo discussed the need for a newsletter because people are asking for information.
- Mr. Tanks addressed if there was a need for additional staff, the position would be in Communications. Staff can do the backwork of graphics. It requires Council to come up with their content until the City can get additional staff.

There was discussion about how the constituents would have to subscribe/sign up on the website. The mayor asked to please do not cross pollinate email lists. People who go into the system will have to consent to a city newsletter. People will comment or ask how the City gets their email. Councilmember Auch noted there would be a unsubscribe button, also. Councilmember Jeffcoat stated there should be a policy before putting out information. Mr. Woods reported he had a policy. Councilmember Woods stated each councilmember would be responsible for their own content and the content would be dropped into the platform. Councilmember Ferguson hoped as grown, the City will consider option 2 where he speaks with Communications, and they will take content to draft the newsletter. He didn't want to have the burden of creating a newsletter. He wanted to make sure zoning cases and DOT updates were in the newsletters. Discussion continued about whether staff at this time could handle additional newsletter burden.

There was additional discussion about getting information out through the postal service to the elderly that did not have emails. Mayor Owens noted \$20,000 would be the cost to send a flyer to every citizen. Councilmember Ferguson stated he was told previously that the Communications Department could send out the information. Mayor Owens noted this was a separate conversation than the current agenda item. Councilmember Ferguson asked for a comprehensive strategy.

Discussion and deliberation continued.

- Mr. Wood provided a report of items addressed so far since he came onboard.
- The City does not have the staff capacity to write for the Council. Please send the newsletter information to Executive Assistant Jasmine Owens.
- The timeline for the newsletters was discussed. Councilmember Ferguson stated the City needs to focus on letting people know they are in the City.
- Councilmember Herndon explained she would work on a newsletter when she felt she had items of interest and time to work on a newsletter. Councilmember Jeffcoat summarized it was about a communication campaign.
- City Clerk Hiott provided an idea for scheduling and consistency of city event announcements. The City could have one newsletter with District categories for those that have specific items to report for a regularly scheduled newsletter.
- Mayor Owens noted he used his discretionary funds for his newsletter, but using the department has efficiencies.

Discussion continued. Following discussion and deliberation, direction was given to go with Mailchimp. Mr. Woods will set up an account and set up the subscription sign-on feature of Mailchimp. After the account is set up, he will have another work session to share with the Council the workflow of how to get newsletter goes out to their constituents.

6. PRE REGULAR MEETING AGENDA REVIEW

Mayor Owens led in an overview of the Regular Meeting Agenda.

City Attorney Walker-Ashby explained the Emergency Ordinance is done in conjunction with Cobb County's Local Emergency Operation Plan. It is required by State law to have this plan and update every five years. The ordinance has two components: establishing protocol and references acting under Cobb County's Local Emergency Plan. Cobb County staff has reported they are starting to get the new plan into effect by June 2026. This can be held off until the new plan is in place, or Council can put this one in place until the new plan is adopted. The plan does not have to be adopted on Wednesday since the plan was just received. This is the first read of the ordinance. She recommended adopting the ordinance and the resolution on the same night.

For additional information, she referenced the need to adopt in the future the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP). These two plans qualify the City to receive the GEMA FEMA funds. She provided additional information about the adoption of these plans and consideration if the city would need to hire a consultant to lead in the drafting of the plans. The COOP will be coming in about six months. Discussion continued.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF NEEDED) FOR LITIGATION (O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(B)(1)(A)REAL ESTATE(O.C.G.A. 50-14-3 (B)(1)) PERSONNEL (O.C.G.A. 50-14-3 (B)(2)) AND MISC. EXEMPTIONS (O.C.G.A. 50-14-3 (B)(4)&(5))

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Ferguson and seconded by Councilmember Herndon to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. There being no further business, the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 9:57 pm.

Dr. Michael Owens, Mayor

Susan Hiott, City Clerk