



CITY OF MABLETON, GEORGIA
Riverside EpiCenter
135 Riverside Pkwy, Mableton, GA 30168
July 13, 2026 at 6:30 PM

The Honorable Michael Owens, Mayor
The Honorable Ron Davis, Mayor Pro Tem/District 1 Councilmember
The Honorable Michael McNeely, District 2 Councilmember
The Honorable Keisha Jeffcoat, District 3 Councilmember
The Honorable Cassandra Brown, District 4 Councilmember
The Honorable TJ Ferguson, District 5 Councilmember
The Honorable Debora Herndon, District 6 Councilmember

SPECIAL CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Owens called the meeting to order at approximately 6:37pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Deputy City Clerk Benson conducted the roll call and a quorum was present.

3. INVOCATION

City Manager Tanks led the Invocation.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilmember Jeffcoat led the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilmember Jeffcoat and seconded by Councilmember McNeely to approve the agenda as written. The motion carried 7-0.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. Public Hearing and Second Read: Ordinance Setting a Millage Rate for the Public Safety Services District - Attorney Emilia Walker-Ashby, Finance Director Karen Ellis and City Manager Bill Tanks**

Open Public Hearing

Speakers who are in favor (10 minutes time limit for in favor)

Speakers who are opposed (10 minutes time limit for opposition)

Close Public Hearing

Questions and Comments by Mayor and Council

Vote: Consideration and Approval of Ordinance Setting a Millage Rate for the Public Safety Services District

Mayor Owens introduced the item and recognized City Manager Tanks and Finance Director Karen Ellis to present, with support from the City Attorney.

City Manager Tanks explained that the presentation would include three parts: a legal overview by the City Attorney, detailed information and responses to specific questions from Finance Director Karen Ellis, and a high-level overview from the City Manager.

City Manager Tanks noted that the item has been under discussion since April 2025, with the Council taking time to evaluate all available options. He explained that an agreement between the City and County is legally necessary to meet service delivery requirements. He stated that the proposed ordinance would establish a 4.5 millage for a special service district dedicated to public safety, emphasizing that it would be a dedicated service and provide the City with local control over its public safety services.

Finance Director Karen Ellis outlined the impact of the proposed 4.5-mill public safety millage, emphasizing that the revenue would be used exclusively for public safety. She noted that the City already has funding to begin establishing its public safety department and that, if approved, residents would receive information explaining the millage and its implementation. She added that all state property tax exemptions would apply and that the City is pursuing additional local exemptions through the required approval process. Director Ellis welcomed questions from the Council.

The following questions were raised by the Council:

- Councilmember Herndon asked when tax bills would be issued and when payment would be due. Finance Director Ellis stated that bills are expected to be mailed on October 1, with payment due by December 1.
- Councilmember Brown asked whether residents could make split payments. Director Ellis responded that split payments are allowed, provided the full balance is paid by December 1.
- Councilmember Brown also asked what would happen if a resident could not pay by the due date. Director Ellis explained that state-mandated penalties and interest would begin to accrue.
- Councilmember Jeffcoat asked whether there is a grace period. Director Ellis stated that the due date is established by state law and cannot be extended. She added that the City reports taxes to the County, which then reports to the State.
- Councilmember Herndon asked what recourse would be available for residents who are unable to pay. Director Ellis reiterated that penalties and interest would accrue and noted that the City would determine how to address delinquent accounts. She added that any penalties and interest are tied to the property.
- Councilmember Ferguson asked whether the City could work with the County or State to provide a grace period. City Manager Tanks responded that the City cannot override state law, as property taxes are governed by state statute.

Mayor Owens noted that, at a 4.5-mill rate, the estimated cost for a home with a median value of \$350,000 would be approximately \$52.50 per month.

City Manager Tanks reiterated that if any of the residents have specific questions, the

finance team is available to assist with questions and discuss specifics.

Mayor Owens called for any additional questions from the Council. There were none.

Mayor Owens recognized City Attorney Emilia Walker-Ashby, who requested a five-minute recess to allow a chart she had prepared to be displayed to the public. Mayor Owens granted the request, and the meeting reconvened at 7:03p m.

Following the recess, City Manager Tanks addressed questions regarding school tax exemptions for seniors, homestead exemptions, and concerns about double taxation. Finance Director Karen Ellis explained how the tax would be handled for residents who pay property taxes through their mortgage escrow accounts. Mayor Owens reiterated that the proposed levy is a Special Service District (SSD) tax dedicated exclusively to public safety—not a general City property tax—and stated that the SSD approach promotes transparency and accountability.

City Attorney Emilia Walker-Ashby presented a chart comparing Mableton's proposed tax structure with those of other Cobb County cities. She explained that all cities in the county are subject to the same County levies—8.46 mills for the general levy and 2.97 mills for Fire/EMS—for a combined County rate of 11.43 mills. She noted that, with the proposed 4.5-mill Police Special Service District (SSD), Mableton's total combined millage would be 15.93 mills, the lowest overall tax rate among the cities included in the comparison.

Mayor Owens invited questions from the Council. Hearing none, he emphasized the importance of understanding how Mableton compares with other cities.

Mayor Owens asked whether any changes had been made since the ordinance's last reading. City Attorney Emilia Walker-Ashby confirmed that revisions had been made and explained that the primary change was the addition of subsection C, which specifies the payment schedule.

Mayor Owens recognized City Clerk Hiott to introduce the public hearing. She explained the difference between the general public comment and the public hearing comment. Mayor Owens then opened the public hearing and called for those who wished to speak in favor.

After one speaker addressed matters unrelated to the public hearing, Councilmember Jeffcoat requested that five minutes be added to the public hearing to ensure those wishing to speak in favor of the item had an opportunity to do so.

Motion was made by Councilmember Jeffcoat to add an additional 5 minutes to the clock for those who wished to speak in favor. Mayor Owens made a point of order and approved the request. There was no opposition from the Council.

Those who spoke in favor:

Benjamin Bailey
Tyrone Simmons
Brenda Robinson

Mayor Owens called for speakers wishing to speak in opposition. City Clerk Hiott acknowledged that an additional five minutes would also be provided for the opposition, consistent with the additional time granted to those speaking in favor.

Those who spoke in opposition:

Greg Queen
Jim Torrell
Denny Wilson
Corey Jiggetts
Jolie Elder
Joyce Steele
Patricia Thomas
Wayne Glover
A male speaker
Roy Wilcox

Others who submitted comment cards/spoke during the public hearing:

Kelly B Johnson
David Coney
Pat H.
David Chambers

Mayor Owens closed the public hearing and opened the floor for comments and questions. He thanked residents for participating and emphasized the importance of civic engagement and ensuring that residents' voices are heard.

Mayor Owens addressed the proposed millage rate and the ongoing discussions between the City and County regarding public safety services. He noted that Cobb County provided detailed information regarding the cost of providing public safety services to Mableton's approximately 80,000 residents and stated that this information is part of the public record and will be made available on the City's website for public reference. Mayor Owens recognized the accomplishments of the Cobb County Police Department while noting that a long-term agreement for police services was not extended and that the current agreement is limited to one year. Mayor Owens stated that the City has consulted with public safety subject-matter experts regarding the establishment of a Mableton Police Department.

Mayor Owens highlighted the benefits of establishing a dedicated public safety division for the City of Mableton, including dedicated officers and services. He explained that the division would encompass emergency management, law enforcement services, code enforcement, community engagement, and other public safety functions. He encouraged residents to attend regular Council meetings to stay informed.

Mayor Owens opened the floor for Council comments.

Councilmember Davis thanked residents for attending and participating in the discussion. He emphasized the thoughtful consideration that went into the decision and encouraged continued collaboration to strengthen the City of Mableton and the South Cobb community.

as a whole.

Councilmember McNeely stated that public safety is a fundamental responsibility of local government. He emphasized that “we can only control what we can control” and noted that the City had to explore alternative options. He noted that leadership requires making difficult decisions and thanked residents for sharing their comments, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that residents always have a voice.

Councilmember Jeffcoat emphasized that the Council is committed to advocating for the City and its residents. She highlighted the effort involved in establishing a rate that serves the best interests of the community and reiterated the Council’s commitment to fiscal responsibility. She stated that funds generated through the Public Safety Special Service District will be used exclusively for public safety. Councilmember Jeffcoat noted that while the City may have the ability to establish a police department quickly, the process should be approached thoughtfully and strategically. She emphasized the importance of making methodical, well-informed decisions and thanked residents for attending, sharing their concerns, and participating in the discussion.

Councilmember Brown thanked residents for attending and sharing their perspectives. She mentioned that South Cobb has experienced historic disinvestment, which contributed to her support for cityhood and the opportunity for Mableton to shape its own future. She emphasized that leadership requires navigating challenges as they arise and highlighted the importance of economic development to generate additional revenue and reduce the financial burden on residents. Councilmember Brown acknowledged the timeline pressures surrounding the establishment of a police department and encouraged residents to reach out with questions, reinforcing the importance of maintaining open communication between the Council and the community.

Councilmember Ferguson noted the increase in property values throughout the City and emphasized that the Council’s focus remains on ensuring the safety of residents while making sound, fiscally responsible decisions in the best interest of Mableton. He encouraged residents to continue supporting efforts to build and move the City forward, expressed appreciation for Cobb County’s public safety personnel, and highlighted the Council’s passion and commitment to serving the community and making decisions that support the City’s future.

Councilmember Herndon expressed gratitude to those in attendance and emphasized the importance of honesty and transparency throughout the process. She noted her concerns and stated that residents have not received the best deal but acknowledged the challenges and decisions facing the City. Councilmember Herndon raised concerns about the lack of clarity regarding costs and suggested involving the public earlier in discussions to promote greater transparency. She expressed that the proposed millage is unfair, negatively impacts constituents, and represents a disservice to the community.

Mayor Owens called for any additional comments.

Mayor Owens referenced the information presented by the Cobb County Police Department during the January 5 public meeting, which outlined the methodology used to determine the estimated cost of police services for the City of Mableton. He noted that discussions regarding a Special Service District and the development of a public safety division have

been ongoing for more than a year. Mayor Owens stated that he would ensure the information is made available on the City's website and emphasized that the Council has continued to address concerns regarding double taxation while prioritizing the protection of public safety services.

Mayor Owens welcomed comments from the City Manager and City Attorney.

City Manager Tanks discussed the estimated \$22 million cost of public safety services and explained how that amount resulted in the proposed 4.5-mill rate. He discussed the negotiation process and the considerations that led the City toward establishing its own public safety division, highlighting the benefits of dedicated and focused City services. He addressed additional resident questions and concerns, emphasizing that a service delivery agreement is required by the State and that failure to reach an agreement could have resulted in sanctions. He encouraged residents to continue reaching out with questions and remain engaged in the process.

Mayor Owens called for a motion.

Motion was made by Councilmember Ferguson and seconded by Councilmember Brown to approve the Ordinance setting the millage rate for the public safety special service district. The motion passed 6-1. Councilmember Herndon voted against.

Mayor Owens thanked the Council, City staff, and residents for their efforts, engagement, and participation throughout the process.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** - 2 minutes per speaker - no more than 30 minutes for all speakers. Anyone wishing to make a public comment should complete and submit the public comment card to the City Clerk prior to the start of the meeting.

Those who spoke during public comment were:

Rosie Turner acknowledged the Council for their hard work and dedication. She encouraged rest and breaks for the Council to maintain well-being.

Joyce Steele shared her feedback on the presentation of the budget to the public. She suggested including comparisons with past budgets, using common language, and providing additional details to help residents better understand the information.

Denny Wilson expressed her opinion on the idea of double taxation of the residents by the County and suggested that the City should have taken further legal action.

Kelly B. Johnson thanked the Council for their display of humility tonight and noted that he will be sending his concerns via email for the Mayor's consideration.

Those who turned in general public comment cards & did not wish to speak:

Brian Moore

Bryce Lingenfelter

There were no additional speakers. Mayor Owens recognized State Representative Terry Cummings to share her thoughts.

State Representative Terry Cummings stated that she is the only State Representative that lives in Mableton. She acknowledged the work of the City Council on this matter. She noted that she was not expecting police services this soon. She highlighted that this is where we are. She emphasized that herself and no other member of the Cobb legislative delegation have plans on moving forward with dissolving the City. She supported the idea of the City taking further legal actions against the County. She acknowledged the excellence of the Cobb County Police Department. She encouraged the Council to continue looking for avenues to resolve this issue.

Mayor Owens thanked Representative Cummings for her words and for attending.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilmember Jeffcoat and seconded by Councilmember Herndon to approve the Consent Agenda as written. The motion carried 7-0.

- a. **Approval of a Resolution Updating the City of Mableton Classification and Pay Plan and for Other Lawful Purposes**
- b. **To review a summary of the License Review Board hearing conducted on June 2, 2026 for Prime Enterprise LLC DBA Citgo Food Mart, Jasdaya Enterprise LLC DBA Buddy's Market and Public Super Markets, Inc. DBA Publix Supermarkets, Inc., #0464.**

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. **Second Read - Ordinance Updating the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System (GMEBS) Defined Benefit Retirement Plan Agreement for City of Mableton and General Addendum - Human Resources Director Jeanne Pope**

Mayor Owens introduced the item and recognized HR Director Jeanne Pope to provide additional information. Director Pope stated that there had been no significant changes since the first reading and explained that the requested updates to the ordinance were intended to correct minor discrepancies in the tenure dates of a couple employees. She then asked if the Council had any questions. Hearing none, Mayor Owens called for a motion.

Motion was made by Councilmember Ferguson and seconded by Councilmember Davis to approve the Ordinance updating the Georgia Municipal Associations' Employee Benefit System (GMEBS) Defined Benefit Retirement Plan. The motion carried 7-0.

10. 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))

Mayor Owens announced the original agenda item 10 a and asked that the item be considered after the executive session.

Motion was made by Councilmember Ferguson and seconded by Councilmember Brown to move item 10a after the Executive Session. The motion carried 7-0.

The item was voted on after Executive Session. (Clerk's note: Item 10a was moved on the agenda to item 11a)

Motion was made by Councilmember Jeffcoat and seconded by Councilmember Ferguson to enter Executive Session for litigation, real estate, and personnel at approximately 9:13pm. The motion carried 7-0. Yeas: Davis, McNeely, Jeffcoat, Brown, Ferguson, Herndon and Owens

Motion was made by Councilmember Jeffcoat and seconded by Councilmember Brown to exit Executive Session. The motion carried 7-0. Yeas: Davis, McNeely, Jeffcoat, Brown, Ferguson, Herndon and Owens

11. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Consideration and Approval of Award of Professional Services Agreement for Consulting Services for the Public Safety Department and Mayor to negotiate and execute in substantial form the agreement with IXP Corporation - City Manager Bill Tanks
(During meeting, the item was moved to after Executive Session.)**

After Executive Session concluded, the move 10a to now 11a was considered.

Motion was made by Councilmember McNeely and seconded by Councilmember Ferguson for the Approval of Award of Professional Services Agreement for Consulting Services for the Public Safety Department and Mayor to negotiate and execute in substantial form the agreement with IXP Corporation. The motion carried 7-0.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Jeffcoat and seconded by Councilmember McNeely to adjourn. The motion passed 7-0. There being no further business, the Mayor adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:50pm.

Dr. Michael Owens, Mayor

Susan Hiott, City Clerk