



CITY OF MABLETON, GEORGIA

Riverside EpiCenter
135 Riverside Pkwy, Austell, GA 30168
May 28, 2025 at 5:15 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 5:34pm.

2. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Hiott conducted the roll call. Mayor Owens and Council were present. A Quorum was present.

3. AGENDA ITEMS AND DISCUSSION

a. Cobb Travel and Tourism Agreement

Mayor Owens announced the item and provided the background. He mentioned that the City is working to establish a 501(c)(6) to serve as the Mableton Visitor and Tourism Authority. He explained that the City would allocate funds to this Authority, who would then partner with Cobb Travel & Tourism for their expertise and support.

Mayor Owens acknowledged Holly Quinlan, President and CEO of Cobb Travel & Tourism. She noted that Cobb Travel & Tourism has promoted Mableton for years, and this new agreement will provide added expertise and opportunities for the City, to include the "Meet Mableton" initiative.

Councilmember Ferguson asked why the Authority was being established as a 501(c)(6) specifically. Ms. Quinlan explained that, per state regulations, a 501(c)(6) is classified as a business organization. Mayor Owens highlighted that this designation also allows for potential membership opportunities.

4. PRE REGULAR MEETING AGENDA REVIEW

Mayor Owens reviewed the regular meeting agenda and asked the Council if there were any items they would like to discuss further.

Councilmember Auch called attention to Item 8 – Appointments – and requested an update regarding the Communications Director appointment. Mayor Owens clarified that the nomination for the Communications Director will be presented to the Council at the June 11th meeting.

Councilmember Auch asked if any additional items would be added to the agenda. Mayor Owens responded that the City Attorney was still in discussions with Cobb County regarding the IGA and SDS, and the agenda may be amended based on the feedback that is shared.

City Clerk Hiott clarified that, except for the Comp Plan item, Council is expected to vote on each public hearing item individually tonight. City Clerk Hiott highlighted that these are zoning matters and outlined the zoning public hearing process.

Mayor Owens opened the floor for additional discussion, and Councilmember Auch requested an update on the City's Municipal Court.

Motion was made by Councilmember Auch to add the discussion of the Municipal Court to the work session agenda. Councilmember Herndon seconded. The motion passed.

City Manager Tanks provided an update. He stated that now that the City has adopted an Ordinance, the next steps are to appoint leadership and secure an adequate facility. Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat asked about a timeline. City Manager Tanks responded that the Municipal Court is currently expected by October. He explained that the primary goal of the Court is to adjudicate Code Enforcement violations, with a primary focus on achieving compliance. He noted that while compliance has already been achieved without a court, the establishment will further support the City's efforts to stay safe and clean.

Councilmember Oladapo asked if the City would be issuing fines to residents in the meantime. City Manager Tanks clarified that the City is not currently issuing fines but instead focused on educating the residents, issuing warnings and maintaining records for repeat violators. Councilmember Auch asked if there was a way to expedite the process in the meantime while waiting for the official court establishment. City Manager Tanks outlined potential options and noted that the first step is appointing a Court Administrator.

Councilmember Oladapo asked about the timeline for hiring the necessary positions. City Manager Tanks provided an estimated timeline, confirming that a Court Administrator should be in place by July. That individual would then begin staffing the department. City Manager Tanks emphasized that the establishment of the Municipal Court should not be rushed, in order to avoid legal issues and adhere to governing laws.

Councilmember Ferguson expressed concerns about the lack of enforcement in the meantime. He emphasized the risk that some individuals may not attempt to comply between now and October if Code Enforcement lacks specific authorities.

City Manager Tanks and Mayor Owens outlined the various roles and delegation of responsibilities while establishing the Municipal Court. Mayor Owens suggested that the Council hear the perspective of Code Enforcement Director, Alejandro Ferrell. City Manager Tanks noted that the judge will set court dates and that Code Enforcement is

tracking violations and can cite repeat offenders once the Court is established. Mayor Pro Tem requested a timeline for establishing the Court.

Director Ferrell assured that his team has been actively educating the community and plans to reduce the compliance timeframe starting June 1st. He reported that Code Enforcement has handled approximately 300 cases thus far, with the primary issue being residents' lack of awareness. He mentioned that the notices issued by his department now include warnings of potential fines and have promoted stronger compliance. He emphasized that the court will primarily handle egregious violations, with only about 10% of violators expected to go to court. He added that the City Attorney has drafted a repeat violator provision to be included in the City's Ordinance.

Councilmember Auch reiterated her question about whether any additional items should be added to the agenda with the Attorney present. Mayor Owens noted that the IGAs and SDS Resolution with the County were not included and asked the City Attorney if they should be added.

She recommended discussion of the Resolution and noted that she has received, and continues to receive, documents concerning the matter from the County. She requested that Council enter Executive Session to discuss. She noted an update on the County's position and recent changes, particularly concerning police services.

Mayor Owens provided an overview of developments since Friday's SDS meeting, noting that negotiations are ongoing. City Attorney Walker-Ashby added that the County's attorneys have the flexibility to finalize the agreement in substantial form. She also noted that the County has made some concessions already. She advised the Council to speak candidly and with caution to avoid straining relations with the County.

Councilmember Ferguson expressed his frustration. Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat agreed and asked whether significant changes had been made. Mayor Owens confirmed they had not. Attorney Walker-Ashby acknowledged that changes were made to the agreed-upon terms and said she would like to review them with Council and seek direction moving forward. She added that, although this Resolution represents the County's formal endorsement, they still have the flexibility to make adjustments. She stressed to Council that there were no substantial changes made to the agreement as a whole, but specific changes were made to the sensitive matter of law enforcement services.

Councilmember Oldapao asked whether the matter could be discussed in Executive Session. Attorney Walker-Ashby confirmed that, due to threats of litigation, it is appropriate for discussion in Executive Session.

Councilmember Auch asked what would happen if an IGA between the City and Cobb County was not in place by May 31st. Attorney Walker Ashby stated that the Department of Community Affairs would declare all cities within Cobb County, as well as the County itself, as non-compliant and subject to sanctions. She noted that these sanctions could potentially lead to a shutdown of City and County operations, including the suspension of County-provided services to the City.

Councilmember Auch asked if there was potential leeway after May 31st. The City

Attorney noted that options remain for all parties and that the State's main goal is to secure a final agreement. She provided additional details and recommended further discussion in the Executive Session, followed by a public vote.

Councilmember Ferguson requested an amendment to the regular meeting agenda to prioritize this discussion. Mayor Owens acknowledged the request.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

6. 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))

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat to Adjourn. Councilmember Ferguson seconded. The motion passed.

Mayor Owens adjourned the meeting at 6:31pm.

Dr. Michael Owens, Mayor

Susan Hiott, City Clerk