



CITY OF MABLETON, GEORGIA

Riverside EpiCenter
135 Riverside Pkwy, Austell, GA 30168
June 11, 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 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Owens called the meeting to order at 6:47 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Hiott called the roll. Mayor Owens and Council were present. A quorum was present. City Attorney Walker-Ashby was absent and was represented by Michael Huening, another attorney from her firm.

3. INVOCATION

Councilmember Davis led the Invocation.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Owens expressed deep sympathy to City Manager Tanks for the loss of his beloved wife, Lee Ann Tanks, and shared heartfelt words of comfort and support during this difficult time.

Councilmember Ferguson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilmember Oladapo to approve the agenda as written. Councilmember Herndon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. Presentation and Review of FY 2026 Budget and First Public Hearing on FY 2026 Budget and First Read of Ordinance - Finance Director Karen Ellis

Mayor Owens opened the public hearing for the FY26 City Budget and recognized Finance Director Karen Ellis. Director Ellis noted one change since the May presentation and reviewed the budget calendar, stating the process will conclude with the second public hearing and adoption on June 25. She outlined budget principles and Council priorities. She summarized the City's General Fund Operating Budget. She clarified that TAVT should have been listed next to property taxes and emphasized that it refers to vehicle taxes, not

real estate, and stated that the corrected version will be posted online. Director Ellis confirmed the City is proposing a balanced budget. She detailed the Special Revenue Funds, and noted the only new addition is the fund for the Six Flags Special Services District. She concluded with a summary of all funds, totaling approximately \$19.2 million.

Councilmember Ferguson asked why the funds allocated to the Mableton Development Authority were not listed. Director Ellis responded that the information is included in the full budget document. Mayor Owens inquired about the budget allocation for the enhanced maintenance of City rights-of-way. She confirmed it is included in the General Fund under Facilities and provided additional details.

Director Ellis introduced the public hearing by reading the following:

Dear Mayor and City Council,

The proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget is submitted to the Mableton City Council in compliance with State Law (O.C.G.A. § 36-81-2 et seq.). This budget was developed based on the priorities adopted by City Council in February 2025, including Fiscal Soundness, Community Engagement, Green Initiatives, Housing Initiatives, Managed Growth, Technology and Innovation, and Responsible Development.

The FY2026 Budget maintains adequate reserves in fund balance to ensure sound fiscal integrity of the City of Mableton (City). The FY2026 Budget includes resources that will allow the City to provide a high level of general government services to the citizens of Mableton. This proposed budget also provides capital funding to establish the City's growing infrastructure needs.

The budget process included an assessment to determine the quality of services delivered and projected operational needs. The City Manager and Finance Director met with departments to assess projected goals and to discuss the resources needed to meet these goals. Guidance and direction were also obtained through City Council Budget Review Meetings. During these Review Meetings, Council received briefings about economic conditions and short-term economic outlook, budget planning assumptions, operating department requests for resources, and capital programs.

Public hearings are scheduled to gain citizen input and enable all members of the City Council to better understand the needs of the entire community prior to budget adoption. The final budget is scheduled to be adopted by the City Council on June 25, 2025.

The proposed budgets for all operating, special revenue, and capital funds total \$19,211,093. The City's General Fund provides for general government operations of the City and maintains adequate working capital necessary for the City's financial health and stability. This fund accounts for most of Mableton's operations and has a budget of \$16,026,093. The remaining funds include the Tree Fund, the Six Flags Special Services District Fund, the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund, and the Capital Projects Fund. The Capital Projects Fund adopts project budgets where the adopted appropriations do not lapse at the end of a fiscal year; they remain in effect until project completion or re-appropriation by City Council.

The FY2026 General Fund Budget provides for \$9,148,000 for personnel and related benefits (57%); \$4,404,900 (28%) for operations and equipment; \$1,960,000 (12%) for

capital improvements; and \$513,913 (3%) towards debt service. All eligible City employees may receive a 2.5% cost of living salary increase.

The City's goal is to adopt an operating budget where current revenues equal anticipated expenditures. All departments supported by the resources of the City must function within the limits of the financial resources identified or available specifically to them. Budgets cannot exceed available resources, defined as revenues generated in the current period added to balances carried forward from prior years. The budget is a dynamic rather than static plan, which allows for adjustments and amendments as circumstances change. The City Council must approve all increases in total fund appropriations. Amounts in this budget may be reallocated within funds by approval of the City Manager as long as the total budgeted amounts do not exceed these appropriations by fund. Department Heads submit budget amendment requests transferring appropriations from one line item to another within the specific department appropriation with approval by the Finance Director and the City Manager.

Under the City's utilized financial policies, the City's fund balance is maintained at or above \$4.3 million, or 33% of budgeted revenues. The purpose of fund balance is to provide adequate cash flow, to cover the cost of expenditures caused by unforeseen emergencies, to cover shortfalls caused by revenue declines, and to eliminate any short-term borrowing for cash flow purposes.

The focus of the FY2026 Budget is to provide excellent services to our citizens and business customers and to continue to allocate significant resources dedicated to improving infrastructure and the City's quality of life.

Tree Fund - This fund is being established this fiscal year to allow the City to become an official Tree City and accounts for revenues received from development that reduces tree canopy below mandated minimums. All revenues collected in this fund are used to enhance tree canopy on rights of way and on public properties. The amount estimated to be needed to establish the City's Tree Fund for the FY2026 budget has been set at \$160,000.

Six Flags Special Services District Fund - This fund accounts for the property taxes being collected in the Six Flags Area Special Services District, established in 2015. The taxes collected will be used to fund future redevelopment projects, wayfinding and gateway signage, and landscape improvements in the area. The anticipated taxes budgeted for FY2026 is \$1,250,000.

Hotel Motel Fund - The room taxes imposed upon hotels and motels located within the City are accounted for in this fund. A portion of these funds can be retained by the City and a portion is expended for a narrow range of projects and activities allowed by State Law (O.C.G.A. § 48-13-51). These funds are currently distributed as follows: the City General Fund - 37.50%, Meet Mableton DMO – 43.75%, and the promotion/marketing of the City - 18.75%. The anticipated taxes budgeted for FY2026 is \$375,000.

Capital Projects Fund - This fund accounts for all facilities, parks, and infrastructure construction in the City. Funds are derived from contributions from the General Fund as well as other grants and funding sources. The appropriations in this fund do not lapse at year-end, but rather, unspent amounts are carried forward to future periods until the

individual projects are completed. The FY2026 budget for this fund is \$1,400,000.

The City of Mableton FY2026 Budget is the culmination of the City's Priority Driven Programming process that reflects Council's approved priorities along with significant citizen engagement and feedback throughout the previous fiscal year. This budget provides the needed resources to provide services and projects that meet the needs of our citizens now and in the future.

As we celebrate our first full fiscal year of incorporation and our first annual budget, the FY 2026 Budget reflects Mableton's commitment to financial discipline, transparency, accountability, and fiscal prudence. Finally, our sincere appreciation is expressed to staff and department heads for the amount of work and effort expended in this process under tremendous time pressures.

Respectfully Submitted.

Mayor Owens expressed appreciation for the extensive work that went into developing the City's first official budget. He noted that what began as the City's voice to the Mayor and Council has now been formalized into a budget. Mayor Owens then opened the public hearing, and City Clerk Hiott provided instructions for those wishing to participate.

Resident Denny Wilson, speaking as a Cobb County Master Gardener, requested clarification on the \$160,000 allocated for trees. She asked what it means to be a 'Tree City' and where the trees would be planted throughout the City. Director Groth responded and provided additional details.

City Manager Tanks emphasized that there will also be an educational effort included in the budget to inform residents about the 'Keep Mableton Beautiful' initiative, with ample opportunities for community involvement. There were no additional comments in favor of or against the public hearing topic.

Mayor Owens thanked everyone for their input and thanked Director Ellis for the presentation. Mayor Owens closed the public hearing.

7. PRESENTATIONS/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/PROCLAMATIONS

a. City of Mableton Community Development Department Update - Community Development Director Michael Hughes

Mayor Owens recognized Community Development Director Michael Hughes, who provided the following updates:

- Current staffing :The team was characterized as both young (new to Mableton) and experienced.
- Adopted ordinances to date.
- Updates across key divisions: Business License, Permit, Land Development, Planning and Zoning, Historic Preservation, and the Comprehensive Plan.
- Upcoming technology implementation.
- Launch of a new website page.
- Development of a Business License Policy Handbook.

Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat asked how the Council would be kept informed about significant

planning and zoning activities in their districts. He responded that he is happy to schedule regular individual meetings with Council members. She inquired about implementing a program similar to the 'In the Zone' meetings. City Manager Tanks said Council could host such a program but cautioned against over committing staff.

Mayor Owens asked about staffing for regulatory and alcohol licenses. Director Hughes responded that two staff members are currently assigned but noted that an additional position may be needed. He also mentioned four vacancies in the department that could be allocated to this effort if the workload requires it.

Councilmember Ferguson asked about the process for handling delinquent businesses. Director Hughes acknowledged it is on the team's radar and that resources will need to be dedicated to the effort. Councilmember Ferguson asked if additional staff would be needed. Director Hughes confirmed. City Manager Tanks clarified that compliance falls under Code Enforcement, highlighting a 'hit or surge' effort to address concerns more promptly. For the long term, he noted that the Code team is considering creating a commercial division to work alongside the business license team.

Councilmember Herndon asked about establishing the Historic Preservation Commission. Director Hughes replied that a draft ordinance is under review and will be sent to legal before Council is asked to make appointments.

b. Presentation and Discussion of the Affiliation Process to Establish Keep Mableton Beautiful - Sustainability, Waste, and Beautification Director Emily Groth

Mayor Owens introduced the item and recognized Sustainability, Waste, and Beautification Director Emily Groth. Director Groth presented on the process of establishing Keep Mableton Beautiful, highlighting Keep America Beautiful—a national nonprofit dedicated to community improvement since 1953—with which the City would seek affiliation. She outlined the benefits of this partnership.

She detailed the steps required to establish Keep Mableton Beautiful (KMB) as follows:

1. Application
2. Training
3. Establishing the KMB organizational structure
4. Filing for 501(c)(3) status (allows fundraising opportunities)

Director Groth outlined operational expectations and introduced several initial projects to begin once Keep Mableton Beautiful is established.

To close, she provided updates on the upcoming Household Hazardous Waste Event this summer and announced that waste haulers' quarterly reports are due by August 15th. She also highlighted the City's recycling drop-off site at 6116 Mableton Parkway.

Mayor Owens noted that when the City established its first spending plan, it approved \$25,000 for beautification efforts, including the launch of Keep Mableton Beautiful, and will continue to allocate funds for this initiative. He stated that an initial effort to establish Keep Mableton Beautiful was made but paused due to staffing shortages. He confirmed that an application and letter of support had been submitted. He clarified the distinction between the board and the committee and mentioned there is a list of residents who have already expressed interest in joining the larger committee. He offered to share the list to help move

the next steps forward and encouraged Director Groth to engage these residents while Council considers board appointments. Director Groth clarified that the community training is open to everyone and serves as an introduction to the proposed Keep Mableton Beautiful. The affiliate training, however, will be limited to a board of seven members.

Councilmember Ferguson clarified for the record that the recycling drop-off location is 6116 Mableton Parkway.

8. APPOINTMENTS

9. 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.

Ms. Denny Wilson expressed her support for the Mayor and Council's decision, noting she obtained a County email through open records request which confirmed that law enforcement, DOT, and stormwater services would be cut off at 11:59 p.m. She applauded the Council for ensuring Mableton residents continued to have law enforcement, thanking them for protecting the community and allowing residents peace of mind.

Mr. Kelly Johnson expressed condolences to City Manager Tanks and gratitude to Councilmember Auch. He challenged the Mayor and Council to consider their legacy for Mableton 2045.

Ms. Shelia Edwards stated that she has followed the service delivery process closely and emphasized the importance of truth. She highlighted that South Cobb has repeatedly been overlooked and questioned the support of certain local leaders during the service delivery dispute. She voiced her concerns and challenged the Council to ask for the records as they continue to go back and forth on the police agreement with the County.

Mr. Joshua Helms expressed concerns about storm-related power outages and inquired about the existence and management of an infrastructure plan. City Clerk Hiott clarified that public comment is for expressing concerns, not Q&A. Mayor Owens assured Mr. Helms that the issue will be addressed.

10. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Owens named the items to be approved on the Consent Agenda.

Motion was made by Councilmember Auch and seconded by Councilmember Davis to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed.

- a. May 28, 2025 Work Session Minutes**
- b. May 28, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes**
- c. May 30, 2025 Special Called Meeting Minutes**

11. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

12. NEW BUSINESS

a. **Consideration and Approval for Mayor to finalize and execute Agreement Between City of Mableton and (Vishal Hawthorne Plaza, LLC) via Atlanta Commercial Real Estate Brokers for the Lease of Hawthorne Plaza Shopping Center, 1245 Veterans Memorial Highway, Suite 30, Mableton, GA 30126 - City Manager Bill Tanks**

Mayor Owens introduced the item and recognized City Manager Tanks, who confirmed an existing agreement with Vishal Hawthorne Plaza, LLC. He noted the new agreement covers an additional suite that will house the City's Municipal Court. Mayor Owens added that the location offers private parking.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat for the Consideration and Approval of an Agreement between the City of Mableton and (Vishal Hawthorne Plaza, LLC) via Atlanta Commercial Real Estate Brokers for the Lease of Hawthorne Plaza Shopping Center, 1245 Veterans Memorial Highway, Suite 30, Mableton, GA 30126. Councilmember Ferguson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilmember Ferguson asked about the timeframe. City Manager Tanks said the City aims to have the court space ready by October, realistically by year-end, with the potential to start sooner with the help of City Partners. Mayor Owens noted the 5,000-square-foot space requires a security-focused build-out. City Manager Tanks confirmed the property owner will manage construction and share costs and responsibility as part of the agreement.

Attorney Huening requested an amendment to the original motion. An amended **Motion** was made Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat for Mayor to finalize and execute an agreement between the City of Mableton and (Vishal Hawthorne Plaza, LLC) via Atlanta Commercial Real Estate Brokers for the Lease of Hawthorne Plaza Shopping Center, 1245 Veterans Memorial Highway, Suite 30, Mableton, GA 30126. Councilmember Ferguson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

b. **Consideration and Approval of Agreement Between the City of Mableton and MCRE Management Partners, LLC for the 6116 MABLETON PARKWAY SW, SUITE 136, Mableton, GA 30129 - City Manger Bill Tanks**

Mayor Owens introduced the item and recognized City Manager Tanks, who noted the agreement expands the City's current space. Mr. Tanks highlighted the City's experienced community development team, including one of the state's top chief building officials and inspectors. Due to staff growth, additional space is needed. He added that the City plans to occupy the space as-is, with only minor renovations until funding allows for a full build-out.

Motion was made by Councilmember Ferguson to finalize and execute the agreement between the City of Mableton and MCRE Management Partners, LLC for 6116 MABLETON PARKWAY SW, SUITE 136, Mableton, GA 30129. Councilmember Davis seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

13. OTHER BUSINESS/DISCUSSION

14. CITY MANAGER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS

City Manager Tanks thanked City staff and volunteers for their efforts during Mableton's 2nd Anniversary weekend. He expressed pride in the City's growth and thanked everyone for their continued support. He mentioned an upcoming hazardous waste program by the Sustainability, Waste, and Beautification Department.

City Manager Tanks thanked everyone for their kind acknowledgments of his wife, Lee Ann Tanks. He shared something he learned from her: 'You don't realize what you have until it's gone.'

He applauded the Council for being incredibly supportive, which has allowed the City to build a team of outstanding, top-tier staff. He recognized the City staff—highlighting the directors—for their dedication and for keeping operations running smoothly in his absence. He shared that a visitation for his wife, Lee Ann Tanks, will be held on Sunday, with the service to follow on Monday. He directed everyone to West Cobb Funeral Home for further details.

Mayor Owens asked the City Manager if there was a recommendation for an Executive Session; he responded that there was none.

15. CITY ATTORNEY/CITY CLERK/STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS

No comments.

16. MAYOR AND COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS

Councilmember Davis commended City Manager Tanks for his dedication and commitment to making a difference. Councilmember Davis emphasized that his personal decisions are driven by the City's best interest, not by re-election motives. He acknowledged the difficulty and necessity of certain choices. As a 28-year resident, he is personally invested in the community and will always prioritize what's best for the City.

Councilmember Oladapo thanked everyone for attending and extended condolences to the Tanks family, acknowledging the love City Manager Tanks shared with his wife, Lee Ann. (Due to the emotional nature of the discussion, her comments will be resumed at the conclusion of Council remarks.)

Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat thanked everyone for attending and spoke about the importance of compassion and community, referring to the Council as a family. She applauded City Manager Tanks for his professionalism and offered prayers for him with regard to his beloved wife, Lee Ann Tanks. She explained her vote to approve the \$9.5 million agreement with the County, emphasizing the need to avoid sanctions and police vulnerability after the May 31 deadline. She stressed the value of long-term relationships with the County and neighboring cities. Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat encouraged early voting for the Georgia Public Service Commission and shared info about upcoming community events, including kids' karaoke at The Green Room and a Juneteenth tribute at Matilda's Garden. She also recognized June as Black Music Month and wished all fathers a Happy Early Father's Day.

Councilmember Auch reminded everyone of the Comprehensive Plan public engagement meeting on June 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Epi Center. She highlighted a Mableton Run Club

opportunity and highlighted the second Mableton Food Truck Friday event on June 20. She acknowledged Father's Day and recognized videographer James Hammond, a brand-new father. Lastly, she extended condolences to City Manager Tanks.

Councilmember Ferguson thanked everyone for attending and acknowledged receiving some public and private backlash. He stressed the importance of knowing and operating within one's purpose and using his platform. He noted that SDS questions and conversations will take time, but assured residents that their voices are heard as Council works toward the best SDS deal. He highlighted June as Men's Health Month and encouraged men to prioritize their health. He expressed condolences to City Manager Tanks and emphasized the contribution his family has made to Cobb County. Lastly, he invited everyone to the "A.C.T.I.V.E. Mableton Men's Movement" walking event he will be hosting on June 14 at 8 a.m.

Councilmember Herndon thanked attendees and online viewers of the City's town hall, expressing appreciation for constituent engagement. She also extended condolences to City Manager Bill Tanks and his family. She expressed appreciation and gratitude to City Manager Tanks.

Councilmember Oladapo continued with her comments. She noted a recent Riverside Parkway clean-up hosted by Keep Cobb Beautiful and the Austell Task Force for Districts 1 and 2, thanking participants and announced another one to be held on Saturday at 9 a.m. She thanked Code Enforcement Director Alejandro Ferrell for engaging Riverside apartment residents with helpful information and updates, and praised the Directors for their excellent work.

Mayor Owens acknowledged the City's second anniversary amid ongoing SDS discussions. He hopes to hold a State of the City to highlight achievements. In an interview with MDJ, he addressed critics claiming the City hasn't accomplished anything, emphasizing the significance of having one representative for nearly 100,000 residents and the importance of local representation. He noted that most elected officials will attend the GMA annual conference, expressing excitement about the opportunity for Council to learn, connect, and bring new insights back to the City.

Mayor Owens shared that he spent time in Washington, D.C., with the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, where he serves on the Georgia board chaired by former Senators Saxby Chambliss and Sam Nunn. The group provides him opportunities to speak directly with members of Congress about specific local needs. He highlighted the importance of international affairs and foreign trade for Cobb County, where 500 businesses rely on import/export and face sustainability challenges. Mayor Owens participated in a Capitol Hill meeting emphasizing the need for a local voice and advocated for federal funding to support Mableton's progress, pledging to continue these efforts.

Mayor Owens highlighted his meeting with Congressman Chairman Flood and Ranking Member Cleaver of the House Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, where he led a discussion with 45 other mayors. He read the remarks he shared at that meeting:

I'm Mayor Michael Owens of Mableton, Georgia—we are one of the youngest cities in the country, but one with a deep commitment to equitable housing and community

development.

In a city like Mableton, where we're working to close historic gaps in opportunity, HOME has been essential. We hope to use this program to build a first-generation homeownership pipeline in partnership with trusted local non-profits.

First, we must update the income eligibility caps. The current 80% Area Median Income ceiling excludes too many working families—folks like teachers, transit workers, and police officers—who still struggle to afford a home. Raising the cap to 100–120% of AMI, or even 160% in high-cost areas, would make the program far more accessible.

Finally, let's expand permanently affordable housing models like Community Land Trusts and shared equity programs. These approaches allow us to lock in affordability, reduce displacement, and give families a path to build wealth—not just for themselves, but for future generations.

He assured the Council, staff and residents of the work he is doing to continue to advocate for the City loudly. He stated we will continue to fight this affordable housing crisis.

17. 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))

Motion was made by Councilmember Auch and seconded by Councilmember Oladapo to enter into Executive Session for personnel and real estate. The motion carried. Yeas: Owens, Davis, Oladapo, Jeffcoat, Auch, Ferguson and Herndon (8:29 pm)

Motion was made by Councilmember Auch and seconded by Councilmember Oladapo to close Executive Session. The motion carried. Yeas: Owens, Davis, Oladapo, Jeffcoat, Auch, Ferguson and Herndon (10:02 pm)

18. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn was made by Mayor Pro Tem Jeffcoat and seconded by Councilmember Ferguson. The meeting adjourned at 10:03 pm. Mayor Owens thanked everyone for coming out and being a part of democracy and the City of Mableton.

Dr. Michael Owens, Mayor

Susan Hiott, City Clerk