

City of Mableton

June 11, 2025 Town Hall Meeting Minutes

All the Council were present. Councilmember Oladapo arrived at 5:07 pm.

Updates and Information about Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) Agreements with Cobb County

Mayor Owens started the meeting at 5:00 p.m. He explained the goal of the meeting was to educate and update everyone about the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS). The City has been working with and negotiating with the County over the past couple of months. A presentation was prepared to give an overview and update on what would happen going forward. He thanked Councilmember Auch for her work on compiling the presentation. He thanked the City's Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) Consultant Warren Hutmacher, City Manager Tanks and City Attorney Walker-Ashby for their work. He asked everyone to keep their questions and comments germane to Service Delivery Strategies (SDS) since the town hall meeting was specifically planned for the Service Delivery Strategy update.

Mayor Owens led in the presentation, which is located within the agenda packet and record of the City Clerk's Office.

Highlights of the presentation:

- Mayor Owens explained the lite-city model. A minimum of three services are required to maintain municipal status.
- Mableton's Charter does not limit Mableton to the city-lite model. However, the City will do a cost analysis to look at the services provided and the services that could be provided.
- There is no agreement at this time for park lands. Parks was not a part of the negotiation and discussion during the SDS process.
- The Service Delivery Strategy is a document detailing how cities and counties will provide public services. It outlines which entities (city or county) provide which services, where they are provided, and how they are funded.
- Intergovernmental Agreements must be in place for the County services. Examples: Fire Services.
- Most service agreements discussions went well except for law enforcement services and the Department of Transportation services.
- Cobb County did not know what the cost was to provide service to District 2 (Mableton area).
- The County and all seven cities must have an agreement or sanctions will occur. Sanctions included loss of grant funding, and other funding opportunities.
- The purpose of SDS is to minimize double taxation, resolve disputes, and promote intergovernmental cooperation.
- Newly incorporated cities are exempt from SDS for up to the end of the two-year transition period. Mableton's transition period ended June 01, 2025.
- Mayor Owens summarized the negotiations process with the County.

- The first number was \$23 million and Mableton 0. On April 14, the negotiations started. The County and City did not agree and then had to go to mediation.
- When the County voted on the terms of the mediation agreement, it was not the same as what the City thought the terms were agreed to in mediation. The next day, when Mableton Council considered the agreement, the vote failed.
- Further discussion started again with the County.
- The agreement is a short-term agreement for one year. (The agreement expires completely on May 31, 2025.)
- Mableton will pay \$9.5 for police and road and street maintenance services at the same level as before incorporation.
- The agreement states that the \$9.5 million shall be used by the County to fund police services only.
- A payment of \$3,000,000.00 toward Compensation shall be made by the City to the County on or before May 31, 2026.
- The rest of the \$9.5 million owed (\$6,500,000) shall occur upon the collection by the City of any police special district tax proceeds in 2026, or by December 31, 2026 (whichever one is soonest).

Mayor Owens addressed the Special Service District (SSD):

- A Special Service District is established to deliver specific services (in Mableton's case, Police) within a particular geographical boundary.
- The funding comes from taxes, fees, or assessments levied within the district, so only property owners within the district contribute to the service being provided.
- An example of SSD is Cobb Fire Fund.

Mayor Owens addressed Stormwater Services within the agreement:

- The term of the IGA is one year, expiring on May 31, 2026, or upon termination of the IGA for CCDOT Services, whichever occurs earlier.
- After the agreement ends on May 31, 2026, stormwater will be the sole responsibility of Mableton.
- At a minimum, any extension of stormwater services beyond the termination date will require the City to accept ownership of 177 detention ponds.
- The City will do a cost-benefit analysis to determine what would be better for the City and its residents: The City will look at creating the City's own stormwater utility or the City takes over the detention ponds and maintains the ponds on an ongoing basis.

Mayor Owens addressed what happens next:

- The City will conduct a more detailed cost benefit analysis on Law Enforcement Services, Detention ponds vs Stormwater service, and DOT Road Maintenance services.
- This fall, the County and City will go back to negotiations to establish a more long-term agreement (9 years).
- The City will seek to enter into a long-term agreement (9 years) to:
 - Match the SDS agreement cadence with the other cities
 - Have assurance of what the City's financial expenditures will be over the next decade for those services
 - The specifics of a proposed SDS have not been determined. The City was beginning to look at this.

Questions and discussion from residents followed. Those who spoke were:

Robin Meyer of District 3 asked if there were IGAs in place for the other services the City uses. Councilmember Auch named the IGAs in place and Mayor Owens provided an additional explanation. City Clerk Hiott noted the SDS agreements were on the website in the Resolution folders.

Denny Wilson of District 2 commented about how Mableton paid Cobb County \$32 million last year, and this year slated for \$40 million. She quoted other numbers, claiming that Mableton would be paying double taxation. She addressed how senior citizens in the City can not pay another dime in taxes. She asked Council to please take that into consideration. She stressed that the senior citizens are the voters. Mayor Owens commented further about the challenge to determining and understanding what is and what is not in the County's .846 mileage rate. It was not the intent of the Mayor or Council to have to raise additional funds.

Deidra White of District 6 thanked the Mayor and Council for their negotiations. She knew the process was challenging, and it does not look like the process was fair. She asked about the long range plan for 2045 and how this would impact the overall 2045 plan. She asked if the City could look at having their own law enforcement agency. Mayor Owens explained Comp Plan 2045 was more about land use. He commented further about how the City will do a cost-benefit analysis on services, and as a brand-new City, it is challenging setting up a law enforcement agency. Councilmember Ferguson added everything was on the table. Mayor Owens commented further about looking at the services of the County Sheriff's Office.

Michael Murphy of District 4 commented about how he is hearing about expenditures and not revenue enhancement. He would like to know when the City knew this bill was coming, and why it was not communicated. He had concerns because he felt he was in the dark. Mayor Owens provided additional information about the \$23 million, which was an unconscionable number, and that the meeting on April 14 was a published meeting. Negotiations occurred after that. *The Marietta Daily Journal* and *Cobb Courier* reported on the meeting. He encouraged everyone to speak up about this. He commended Denny Wilson for attending the County meetings. He stressed how important it was for everyone to speak up. Councilmember Auch stated she had not heard any SDS numbers until April 14. Councilmember Ferguson commented additionally about the first \$23 million cost. Mayor Owens commented about some of the options for raising revenues. Councilmember Oladapo commented about revenue generators by the City. She stated it meant to not put all of the balance on the residents. Discussion followed.

Windy of District 4 asked who the residents contact about roads and storm drains. She referenced an area needing storm drain repair. Mr. Tanks explained there was an agreement with the County. She can call the City and staff will advocate on her behalf and the City will follow up.

Lamar Scottie spoke about how long he had been in Cobb County and how Smyrna had changed. He spoke about how much he liked to see the number of people attending the meeting. He was glad he was in the City of Mableton. He spoke about the confidence he had

in the work of the mayor, city manager, and Mr. Hughes.

A speaker of District 4 spoke about having an intruder who assaulted her mom, noting it took the police department 15 minutes to arrive. She asked that Mableton to get their own police department.

Yashica Marshall asked if the City was going to hire a grant writer to help offset these costs. She asked if there was going to be a tax levy or millage rate, that the rate would be equitable, so not a huge burden on the residents. Mayor Owens reported the City had a grant writer. Mayor Owens reported he had just got back from Washington D.C. advocating for the City. He will continue to work for the City to bring grants and funds to the City. He explained the SSD for law enforcement will only go to law enforcement. Mr. Tanks added how the City has to be careful about grant funding. The City has to consider that there is a continual source of income.

Brenda Nash commented about every city having its own police department other than Mableton. Mayor Owens explained how everyone in the County pays the same .846 no matter where they live. Those in the other cities, can get back some of the funds because of double taxation. Ms. Nash commented about letting people know ahead of time, such as the \$20 million quote from the County. She encouraged Mayor and Council to rely on the residents of Mableton to help them work through solutions. Mr. Tanks commented on how Cobb County is the only County that does not have a Special Service District, and that the University of Georgia says Cobb County has a double taxation problem. Councilmember Ferguson explained how the original quote of \$23 million was not true hard numbers and there needed to be good data to show that was the cost. Mayor Owens summarized that the County's \$23 million number was given in June 2023, but the County's methodology of how the numbers were derived was not given until 2025.

Sheila Edwards of District 3 spoke about truth matters. Two weeks ago, the City was told the police service would be cut if it did not agree to the \$9.5 million. The \$9.5 million cost from the County did not have any paperwork or accompanying documents to verify. She asked the Council to ask questions and to push back. She asked who gets to be part of Mableton. A lady with a PHD applied for a job and did not hear back from Mableton. People of Mableton should be given shots with the City of Mableton. Mr. Tanks stated the HR process is still open and is not at the time for staff to contact someone.

Mayor Owens stated it was 6:25 pm. He asked Council if there any comments or questions. There was none.

Motion was made by Councilmember Oladap and seconded by Councilmember Ferguson to adjourn the town hall. The motion passed unanimously. The town hall meeting adjourned at 6:26 pm.