



**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
CITY OF DULUTH, GA
DECEMBER 8, 2025**

PRESENT: Mayor Whitlock, Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, Graeder, and Cummings, City Manager, Asst. City Managers, Department Directors, City Attorney

A work session was held prior to the regular scheduled meeting to allow the elected officials to discuss this evening's agenda items.

Mayor Whitlock called the December 8, 2025 meeting to order at 5:22 p.m., and called for a motion to enter into an Executive Session.

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION

It was necessary to hold an executive session on Real Estate, Pending/Potential Litigation, or Personnel, which is properly excluded from the Georgia Open and Public Meeting Law (O.C.G.A. 50-14).

A motion was made by Councilmember Cummings, seconded by Councilmember Thomas, to adjourn to executive session at 5:22 p.m.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, Graeder, Cummings
Motion carried.

After the discussion, a motion was made by Councilmember Thomas, seconded by Councilmember Graeder, to adjourn from Executive Session and return to regular session at 5:55 p.m.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, Graeder, Cummings
Motion carried.

Councilmember Cummings left the meeting due to illness.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

A motion was made by Councilmember Doss, seconded by Councilmember Thomas, to approve the December 8, 2025 Council Agenda as presented.

**Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.**

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilmember Harkness, seconded by Councilmember Doss, to approve the November 10 & 24, 2025 meeting minutes as presented.

**Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.**

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. UPCOMING EVENTS – www.duluthga.net/events

Peach State Cornhole Fall leagues – Tuesdays/Thursdays

Frosty Fun – Holiday happenings from December 21 through January 4: see website for details.

V. CEREMONIAL MATTERS

1. PROCLAMATION – COUNCILMEMBER HARKNESS {A}

Mayor and Council recognized Councilmember Jamin Harkness for his four years of service as an elected official for the City of Duluth.

2. RICK CASE – “BIKES FOR KIDS” {B}

Mayor and Council recognized the Rick Case organization for their generous contributions to the community through the Bikes for Kids program and for their leadership as valued local business partners. Mark Johnson, General Manager and Tammy Baker, Service Manager for Rick Case Hyundai/Genesis will be attending to accept.

3. PROCLAMATION – DULUTH FALL FESTIVAL ANNIVERSARY {C}

Mayor and Council recognized the Duluth Fall Festival for 42 years of service to the City of Duluth.

VI. MATTERS FROM CITIZENS

No comments were made.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

1. ORDINANCE TO AMEND BUDGET - \$7,500 – DPAC/STORM DRAINS {D}

Approval of this item authorizes the City Manager to execute a contract for the painting of six (6) storm drains located on George Rogers Avenue. The six storm drains on the opposite side of the road were painted earlier this year through a project with DPAC, Paint Love and Duluth HS. Additionally, staff is requesting approval of a budget amendment BA-FY25-16 to add \$7,500 of prior year reserves to Public Art Fund - Spectator Recreation - Technical Services line item for this project.

2. ORDINANCE TO AMEND BUDGET - \$2,986 – POLICE VEHICLES {E}

Approval of this item authorizes ordinance BA-FY26-17 to amend the FY26 budget. Recently, the Police Department sold a vehicle and some miscellaneous parts at auction, after commissions and fees the City received \$2,986. Staff is requesting \$2,986 be added to Police Vehicles - Consolidated Vehicle Maintenance - Vehicle line item, including associated transfer.

3. ACCEPTANCE OF MUNICIPAL ELECTION RUNOFF RESULTS

Section 21-2-493(k) of the Georgia Election Code authorizes the Election Superintendent to certify runoff election results. Approval of this item accepts the certified results of the December 2, 2025 Runoff Election:

Post 3: Lamar Doss	277
Post 3: Marlene Denise Tucker	109

A motion was made by Councilmember Thomas, seconded by Councilmember Graeder, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder
Motion carried.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. ORDINANCE OF REZONING–CASE Z2025-005–RAINBOW VILLAGE {F}

Mayor Whitlock opened the public hearing to consider an ordinance to rezone parcels R6293 656 located adjacent to at 3431 and 3427 Duluth Highway for case Z2025-005.

City Manager James Riker came forward to present. The City of Duluth is the applicant and recently sold a piece of former right-of-way to Rainbow Village. That former right-of-way needs to be zoned to be a part of the Rainbow Village Planned Unit Development (PUD) campus.

Mr. Riker showed the zoning map and the overlay of the campus expansion with the two proposed buildings and the parking between them. The right-of-way area is a proposed driveway to access the expansion.

The Planning Commission and staff recommended approval with conditions at their December 1, 2025 hearing. There are really two conditions here. One of the conditions says all the previous conditions for the campus expansion should remain and then the conditions that the city council placed through the deed transfer of that unused right-of-way should be identified in the conditions of zoning.

Being no further discussion from Council or public, Mayor Whitlock closed the public hearing and called for a motion.

A motion was made by Councilmember Graeder, seconded by Councilmember Doss, to approve, ordinance O2025-51 for Case Z2025-005 with conditions as presented.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder
Motion carried.

2. ORDINANCE OF SPECIAL USE – CASE SU2025-006 –PAWN

{G}

Mayor Whitlock opened the public hearing to consider an ordinance to allow a special use permit on parcel R6322 155 located at 3300 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (Suite E) for Case SU2025-006.

Margie Pozin, Director of Planning and Engineering presented. Owner Anavah, LLC and Applicant Suresh Daswani requested a special use permit to obtain a pawn shop license for this location. The property is zoned C-2 (General Business District). The portion of the business purchasing gold, silver, and fine metals requires a pawn shop license by the State and therefore requires a special use permit to operate in this zoning district.

Ms. Pozin showed the map location and explained the surrounding uses. The subject property totals approximately 1.34 acres and the square footage of the suite is 1,200 sf. The subject property is located in the Peachtree Retail Corridor District. FORWARDuluth envisions this Character Area to be an attractive and energized retail corridor easily accessed by Duluth residents and non-city residents alike.

This “pawnshop” is not a typical pawnshop. “We Buy Gold” buys gold, silver, and other fine metals. They also sell gold silver, and other fine metals. It is the purchasing of such items that requires, through the state, that they be licensed under a pawnshop. One of the conditions requires the business to register with the LEADSOnline program that inventories the merchandise into a nationwide database which can be scanned for any possible stolen goods.

The Planning Commission recommended approval at their November 3, 2025 hearing.

Mayor Whitlock called for discussion from Council. Being none, the Mayor called the applicant forward.

Consultant for the owner, Jimmy Esfahani of 190 W. Oak Street, Lawrenceville, came forward. He explained his industry experience as the sole owner of a Buford We Buy Gold store for more than 15 years. The idea is to provide an upscale location for an average citizen to be able to sell things they inherit or different items of value they no longer need. Very little will be kept on site, so from a security standpoint, there aren't any issues because there isn't a big inventory.

Mr. Esfahani explained the business experience of the applicant, and sample designs for the intended store layout.

Mayor Whitlock clarified that the store would just be buying precious metals and not selling.

Mr. Esfahani responded that the items would mainly be sold to a refinery where they are recycled, or the higher end items may be sold online. He also noted that his Buford store just had its seventh year named as "Best of Gwinnett."

Mayor Whitlock called for questions/comments from the public. There were no further comments.

Mayor Whitlock closed the public hearing and called for a motion.

A motion was made by Councilmember Thomas, seconded by Councilmember Graeder, to approve, ordinance O2025-50 for Case SU2025-006 with conditions as presented.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder
Motion carried.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. AUTHORIZATION FOR CONTRACT – BUNTEN PARK ENGINEERING {H}

Margie Pozin, Director of Planning and Engineering came forward to present. The Mayor and Council was asked to consider a project-specific contract award to Columbia Engineering for continued professional services during the Bunten Park Improvement construction project.

Columbia's current on-call professional services contract will expire on December 31, 2025, and will not be renewed. A stand-alone project specific contract will allow Columbia to continue their support of this project throughout construction by offering construction administration services, responding to construction questions and requests for information, and adjusting the construction plans, if needed.

Further, this ensures Columbia remains accountable for their design services provided during the preconstruction phase. Award of this contract will eliminate a gap in service.

A motion was made by Councilmember Graeder, seconded by Councilmember Doss, to approve, the award of a project-specific contract to Columbia Engineering & Services, Incorporated, as presented."

**Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.**

2. ORDINANCE TO AMEND BUDGET - \$12,500 – CITY HALL ROOF {I}

The City Hall roof needs replacement. Staff is recommending contracting with Reeves Consulting to conduct the following: 1) Prepare bid ready plans and specifications for roof installation, 2) reviewing bids, 3) providing recommendations for contractor selection, 4) reviewing contractor submittals, 5) conducting a pre-roofing meeting with the contractor, 6) monitoring installation of the new roofing system and 7) reviewing close out documents. The contract amount is \$12,500.

Funds for the above projects will come from SPLOST 23 Administrative Facilities Category in the amount of \$12,500.

Staff is requesting approval of a budget amendment BA-FY26-22 to add \$12,500 in unallocated 2023 SPLOST Administrative Facilities to City Hall Design/Building - General Government Buildings - Building line item, including associated transfers.

Being no further discussion, Mayor Whitlock called for a motion.

A motion was made by Councilmember Thomas, seconded by Councilmember Harkness, to approve, ordinance BA-FY26-22 as presented and further authorize the City Manager to execute a consulting contract agreement with Reeves Consulting Company not to exceed \$12,500.

**Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.**

X. MATTERS FROM DEPT HEADS/CITY ATTORNEY

1. ORDINANCE TO AMEND BUDGET - \$15,000 – DECORATIVE SIGNAGE {J}

Over the past several weeks some of the decorative signage in the downtown area has been damaged by vehicle traffic and needs to be replaced or repaired for both safety reasons and overall aesthetics of the area. In cases where the at fault driver is identified, staff files a claim against the driver's insurance carrier seeking reimbursement for the damage.

Staff is requesting approval of a budget amendment BA-FY26-18 for \$15,000 in prior year reserves to be added to the Rental Motor Vehicle Tax Fund - Downtown Development - Signs/Banners line item to replace or repair the damaged signs.

A motion was made by Councilmember Harkness, seconded by Councilmember Graeder, to approve ordinance BA-FY26-18 as presented.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.

2. ORDINANCE TO AMEND BUDGET - \$65,500 – NETWORK SWITCHES {K}

Due to the computer network traffic at the Police Department including normal office usage, city cameras, body cameras and in-car cameras, the police are experiencing outages and a degraded ability to view the live cameras and download body and in-car camera video. Based on an evaluation by our IT staff and an outside consultant the current network switches are not able to handle the increased demand and need to be upgraded.

Staff requested approval of a budget amendment BA-FY26-19 to add \$65,500 in unallocated 2023 SPLOST Public Safety funds to the Police Capital Projects - Police - Computers line item, including associated transfers.

A motion was made by Councilmember Doss, seconded by Councilmember Graeder, to approve ordinance BA-FY26-19 as presented.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.

3. ORDINANCE TO AMEND BUDGET - \$128,000 – FIBER CONNECTION {L}

During the construction of Davenport Road, staff requested conduit be installed under the railroad tracks to facilitate a direct network connection between the Public Safety building and City Hall. Now that construction is complete, staff has received a proposal for \$127,501.52 to install underground fiber between the buildings which will improve the network speed and reliability and provide an additional off site location for data network backup.

Staff requested approval of a budget amendment BA-FY26-20 to add \$128,000 in General Fund prior year reserves to City Hall Design/Building - General Government Buildings - Site Improvements line item, including associated transfers.

A motion was made by Councilmember Thomas, seconded by Councilmember Doss, to approve ordinance BA-FY26-20 as presented.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.

4. ORDINANCE TO AMEND BUDGET - STAFFING REQUEST – DATA ANALYST

{M}

Mayor and Council considered adding a new staff position titled Special Project Data Analyst effective January 2026. The position will coordinate use of new technologies such as AI and computer analysis to assist each department with improving operational efficiencies and coordination of data analysis.

Staff is requesting approval of a budget amendment BA-FY26-21 to add \$46,800 in General Fund prior year reserves to fund the new position and add funds to the following line items in City Manager - City Managers Office: Salaries & Wages \$35,190, Group Insurance \$5,400, FICA Taxes \$2,690 and Retirement/Pension \$3,520.

Councilmember Thomas referenced this as part of a strategy and roadmap for enhancing security and developing protocol and ensuring cost effectiveness for technology use.

A motion was made by Councilmember Graeder, seconded by Councilmember Thomas, to approve ordinance BA-FY26-21 as presented.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.

XI. MATTERS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Mayor Whitlock noted the great turnout and comments received on this past weekend's "Deck the Hall" event.

XII. MATTERS FROM CITY MANAGER

The Train Viewing Platform is ready to open in a few weeks. The ribbon cutting ceremony will be announced.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilmember Thomas, seconded by Councilmember Doss, to adjourn at 6:51 pm.

Voted For: Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, and Graeder.
Motion carried.

The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council is a work session for January 12, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.