

COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Council Chambers
C. E. "Red" McDaniel City Services Center- Second Floor
3111 Citizens Way, Columbus, GA 31906

March 31, 2026
9:00 AM
Consent Agenda/Work Session

CONSENT AGENDA/WORK SESSION

PRESENT: Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson, III and Mayor Pro Tem R. Gary Allen and Councilors John Anker, Travis L. Chambers, Joanne Cogle, Charmaine Crabb, Glenn Davis, R. Walker Garrett, and Toyia Tucker (arrived at 9:18 a.m.). Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge, City Attorney Clifton Fay, Assistant City Attorney Lucy Sheftall, Clerk of Council Lindsey G. McLemore and Deputy Clerk of Council Tameka Colbert.

ABSENT: Councilors Byron Hickey and Bruce Huff were absent. Deputy City Manager Lisa Goodwin was also absent.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson, III, Presiding

INVOCATION: Offered by Pastor Wayne Anthony - St. Peter United Methodist Church

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Skip Henderson

The following documents have been included as a part of the electronic Agenda Packet: (1) WS#1 - State of the Fire-EMS Department PP; (2) WS#2 - Clerk of Council Operations Update PP; (3) WS#3 – Project Update PP; (4) Short Term Vacation Rental Update – 03-31-2026 PP;

The following documents were distributed around the Council table: (1) Clerk of Council Annual Activity Summary; (2) Clerk of Council Operations Update March 31, 2026 – Work Session; (3) Columbus Administered Projects – March 31, 2026

CONSENT AGENDA

MINUTES

1. Approval of minutes for the March 24, 2026, Council Meeting and Executive Session. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Councilor Cogle and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilor Tucker being absent for the vote and Councilors Hickey and Huff being absent from the meeting.

ORDINANCES:

2. **Ordinance (26-010) - 2nd Reading:** An ordinance amending Section 2-3.02. of the Columbus Code to insert a new paragraph (c) which provides that members of the Columbus Airport Commission may be residents of Muscogee County or any adjacent county, and for other lawful purposes. (Councilors Davis and Crabb) Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to adopt the ordinance, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilor Tucker being absent for the vote and Councilors Hickey and Huff being absent from the meeting.

RESOLUTIONS:

3. **Resolution (084-26)** - A resolution expressing the Council's intent with respect to Airport Commission residency requirements. (Councilor Crabb) Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilor Tucker being absent for the vote and Councilors Hickey and Huff being absent from the meeting.
4. **Resolution (085-26)** - A resolution excusing Councilor Byron Hickey from the March 31, 2026, Consent Agenda / Work Session. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilor Tucker being absent for the vote and Councilors Hickey and Huff being absent from the meeting.

WORK SESSION AGENDA

I. State of the Fire & EMS Department - Sal Scarpa, Chief, Fire & EMS

Sal Scarpa, Chief, Fire & EMS, recognized a recent off-duty incident that received statewide attention and commendation from the Governor and introduced Mr. Richard Barfield Jr. to share details of his actions.

Richard Barfield Jr. Fire & EMS described responding to a serious off-duty vehicle accident where he assisted multiple victims, ultimately helping to save the lives of seven individuals.

Sal Scarpa, Chief, Fire & EMS, presented a State of Fire & EMS update, highlighting the department's role as an all-hazards response agency, its ISO Class 1 and long-standing accredited status, and key initiatives. He also reported that while staffing levels are stable, retention remains a challenge. He emphasized ongoing concerns with aging fleet and facility needs as well as the need to restore pay parity, and the department's continued focus on mental health support, technology, and data-driven operations.

II. Clerk of Council Operations Update - Lindsey G. McLemore, Clerk of Council

Clerk of Council Lindsey G. McLemore provided an update on the operations of the Clerk of Council's Office, highlighting its broad responsibilities in supporting Council, maintaining official records, coordinating boards and authorities, managing public access to information, and assisting citizens with city processes. She also outlined improvements made over the past year, including stronger team collaboration, streamlined workflows, expanded digital records access, and a continued commitment to transparency, efficiency, and high-quality service to Council and the public.

(Mayor Henderson left the meeting at approximately 10:15 a.m., at which time Mayor Pro Tem R. Gary Allen began presiding over the meeting.)

REFERRAL(S):**FOR THE CLERK OF COUNCIL:**

- A request was made for staff to send Council an email outlining the challenges associated with maintaining cemetery operations and processes. *(Councilor Tucker)*
- A request was made for staff to provide a list of necessary boards and evaluate their effectiveness. *(Councilor Chambers)*

III. Project Update - Ryan Pruett, Director, Inspections & Code, Vance Beck, Director, Engineering, Will Johnson, Director, Planning

Vance Beck, Director, Engineering, introduced Assistant Engineer John Ussery and provided an update on ongoing and completed infrastructure projects, pointing out steady progress across multiple initiatives despite delays caused primarily by utility conflicts.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER:

A request was made to provide information on the process for citizens to report roadway hazards such as debris causing tire damage. *(Councilor Tucker)*

A request was made to review traffic calming options, particularly for safety concerns in areas like Oakland Park on Walker and Bland streets. *(Councilor Cogle)*

Will Johnson, Director, Planning, provided an update on multiple transportation and infrastructure projects, reporting that several are in design, right-of-way acquisition, or planning phases with timelines extending through 2027 and beyond. He also highlighted coordination with GDOT on several projects and ongoing efforts to align designs and construction.

Vance Beck, Director, Engineering, continued his presentation with updates on resurfacing and maintenance efforts, including coordination with Norfolk Southern on roadway improvements. He reported that the city's average PCI score has improved from approximately 42 to 48 since implementing new software. Ongoing efforts include in-house sidewalk and ADA projects, use of an on-call contractor, and addressing roadway striping needs, with some work completed and additional striping scheduled.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER:

-A request was made to explore providing accessible and possibly online visual maps of roadway conditions to better track and communicate progress on road improvements. *(Councilor Crabb)*

-A request was made to add deteriorating/eroding shoulder areas to the resurfacing or maintenance list for further evaluation. *(Councilor Davis)*

-A request was made to assess roadway conditions and evaluate degraded pavement conditions and identify necessary repairs on Smith Road and the Wooldridge intersection. *(Councilor Davis)*

-A request was made to Review worn section on the curve for possible milling, resurfacing, or repair on the new Whittlesey Boulevard. *(Councilor Davis)*

-A request was made to explore improvements/upgrades to the existing parking garage of the Trade Center. *(Councilor Davis)*

-A request was made to upgrade from metal halide lights to LED lighting at Cooper Creek Park and provide an update on the status. *(Councilor Davis)*

-A request was made to provide a list outlining how the \$12 million in allocated Parks and Recreation funds have been used or is currently being utilized. *(Councilor Tucker)*

-A request was made to conduct a survey of all school sidewalks. *(Councilor Tucker)*

-A request was made to provide an update on the roof condition and needed repairs at the Gallops Recreation Center, and to have staff to provide an update at the April 8 meeting. *(Councilor Cogle)*

-A request was made to inspect and repair broken concrete panels at the 45th Street Railroad crossing.
(Councilor Davis)

-A request was made to provide an update on the roof condition and needed repairs at the Gallops Recreation Center, and to have staff attend the April 8 meeting to address concerns directly.
(Councilor Davis)

Ryan Pruett, Director, Inspections & Code provided an update on several facility and capital improvement projects, stating that the Judicial Center is over 95% complete and on track for completion later this year. He also shared updates on fire station projects, the upcoming Oxbow Creek clubhouse construction, and ongoing planning for the Muscogee County Jail, emphasizing steady progress across multiple initiatives.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER:

-A request was made to revisit and discuss the city's budget process in a future work session, including consideration of strategies such as zero-based budgeting and budget reductions.
(Councilor Anker)

-A request was made for documentation outlining the history, timelines, and prior actions related to the jail. (Councilor Anker)

IV. Short Term Rental Update - Ryan Pruett, Director, Inspections & Code

Ryan Pruett, Director, Inspections & Code provided an update on the city's short-term rental ordinance, explaining that it was last updated in January 2023 and requires annual permits, business licenses, inspections, and background checks for operators. He shared that online permitting is expected to be available by June 2026 and highlighted concerns raised by both operators and residents regarding the current regulations.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER:

-A request was made to look at placing short-term rental regulations, on the legislative agenda for the next session. (Mayor Pro Tem Allen)

-A request was made to evaluate options for limiting short-term rentals, including implementing caps, requiring zoning variances for approval, or developing overlay districts in targeted areas.
(Councilor Garrett)

FOR THE CITY ATTORNEY:

-A request for staff to develop a proposal outlining options for regulating short-term rentals.
(Councilor Garrett)

FOR THE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER:

-A request was made to coordinate with the Columbus Board of Realtors to provide education on short-term rental regulations. (Councilor Crabb)

(Note: Councilor Cogle left the meeting at 12:29 p.m.)

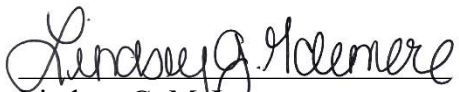
Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge announced that a community meeting for the Liberty Theater and Liberty District will be held on April 6 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. in the council chambers.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mayor Pro Tem Allen entertained a motion to go into executive session to discuss matters of litigation as requested by City Attorney Fay earlier in the meeting. Councilor Garrett made a motion to go into Executive Session, seconded by Councilor Chambers and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilor Cogle being absent for the vote, Councilors Hickey and Huff being absent from the meeting, and the time being 12:29 p.m.

The Regular Meeting reconvened at 1:12 p.m., at which time, Mayor Pro Tem Allen announced that the Council did meet in executive session to discuss matters of litigation; however, there were no votes taken.

With there being no further business to discuss, Mayor Pro Tem Allen entertained a motion for adjournment. Motion by Councilor Garrett to adjourn the March 31, 2026, Consent Agenda/Work Session, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilor Cogle being absent for the vote, Councilors Hickey and Huff being absent from the meeting, and the time being 1:13 p.m.



Lindsey G. McElmore
Clerk of Council
Council of Columbus, Georgia

