

**City of Locust Grove
Retreat Minutes
Courtyard by Marriott – Duluth Downtown
3141 Hill Street
Duluth, GA 30096
Monday, September 29, 2025 – Wednesday, October 1, 2025**

| Members Present: | Staff Present: |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Carlos Greer – Mayor | Tim Young – City Manager |
| Rudy Breedlove – Councilman/Pro Tem | Bert Foster – Assistant City Manager |
| Keith Boone – Councilman | Misty Spurling – City Clerk |
| Willie Taylor – Councilman | Daunte’ Gibbs – Community Development Director |
| Rod Shearouse – Councilman | Jack Rose – Public Works Director |
| E. Olivia McCornell – Councilwoman | Derrick Austin – Police Chief |
| Lester Clark - Councilman | Colleen Cook – Main Street Director |
| | Andy Welch – Attorney |

Monday, September 29, 2025

Mayor Greer called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

Invocation given by Tim Young

Councilman Boone led the Pledge of Allegiance

APPROVAL OF AGENDA –

Mayor Greer asked for a motion. Councilwoman McCornell made the motion to approve the agenda.

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| RESULT | APPROVED |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILWOMAN MCCORNELL |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN BREEDLOVE |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – ALL IN FAVOR |

EXECTUTIVE SESSION – Property Acquisition and Litigation

Motion to go into executive session to discuss property acquisition and litigation by Councilman Breedlove and seconded by Councilman Shearouse. Motion Carried All in favor 8:46 AM.

At 10:00 AM, motion to come back into regular session made by Councilman Boone and seconded by Councilwoman McCornell.

Break at 10:00 AM, return at 10:12 AM

AGENDA ITEMS –

- 1. Downtown Locust Grove “Heart of Locust Grove Downtown Redevelopment Plan” –**

Break at 9:45am and resumed at 10:01am.

Jia Li and Adam Williamson from TSW (consulting firm) and members from KB Advisory Group were present for a presentation on the development and planning of the area as the Heart of Locust Grove. Adam reviewed slides on the screen regarding the area overview. Johnathan Gelber, from KB Advisory Group reviewed slides with details about opportunities and challenges of the plan and said Locust Grove has a strong foundation to start this project. Discussion took place.

2. Main Street/DDA Connection –

Andy led a discussion about city owned property and potentially having the DDA control the property. The council would develop a plan that would be beneficial to the city and hand over properties to DDA to find developers to build (hotel, retail, restaurants) all while making everything connect. Nothing Further.

Break for lunch at 11:51 AM, returned at 1:00 PM.

3. Transportation Projects/Studies –

- **Bill Gardner Parkway enhancements (intersections, median installation, expansion)** - Tim reviewed data from Nearmap and discussion took place about Market Place and Tanger Boulevard. This will be our first intersection project for SPLOST VI.
- **SR 42 additional lane NB** – Bert said this project is moving forward, and per the consultant, have an agreement with GDOT and NS, but waiting on a Stormwater plan. Total is \$2.8 million.
- **Downtown Corridor Study update – Changes from last presentation** – Tim reviewed scope of Colvin Drive to MLK, project estimate \$24.5 million.
- **Peeksville Connector / Tanger Connector / City Hall Connector** – Bert said we are in process of bringing in a new design engineer (local) with hopes of beginning construction sooner. Andy asked if we could hire a new engineer for the road behind Ingles, and Bert said yes. Tim suggested we look at the trail plan together to discuss which ones preferred to prioritize first [short range to long range].

Break at 2:45pm, return at 3:00pm.

- **New Bethlehem Road Interchange (November GDOT Letting) – Future considerations** – We should have the plan review complete by the end of year. Discussion took place about Zack Hinton property (Parcels: 111-01013020, 111-01013015, 111-0103016) reversion of property. Daunté reviewed the process.
- **LMIG for FY 2026 (Market Place Boulevard)** – Tim suggest we allocate all money to Market Place and resurface the entire road. The consensus from the council was all in favor.

BUDGET – Specialty Funds Operations/Capital Improvements FY 2025

4. **Update on FY 2025 Budget** – Tim said it is increasing an additional \$350,000 of which \$3.4 million will be collected from property tax revenues. Discussion took place on areas [run down hotels, or Skyland] to spruce up with Blight taxation. Andy said per Georgia Constitution, the city can put in a Blight tax by passing an ordinance to authorize the increase in taxes for blighted property (if refused to bring into compliance) would be a higher tax than any other property [as a penalty for not correcting the blight], but if corrected, the city would give a slight rollback on tax.

Shearouse asked if the homeowner has homestead exemption on the property, does it exempt them from this tax. Andy said yes, blight tax can only be put on rental property. Shearouse asked if code enforcement enforce blighted property now. Andy said code enforcement gives notice and then a nuisance abatement is issued. The council authorized Andy to draft an ordinance [for Blight tax].

Tim continued discussion about franchise tax and other taxes. Tim said general fund revenues total \$14.661 million and discussed activity of interfund revenues which total \$8.5 million.

Motion to enter executive session to discuss property acquisition by Councilman Breedlove and seconded by Councilman Shearouse. Motion carried all in favor at 4:49 PM.

At 5:18 PM, motion to come back into regular session made by Councilman Breedlove and seconded by Councilman Shearouse.

Mayor Greer asked for a motion to adjourn.

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| RESULT | ADOPTED |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN BREEDLOVE |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN TAYLOR |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – MEETING ADJOURNED @ 5:19 PM |

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

Mayor Greer called the meeting to order at 8:30am

Invocation given by Chief Derrick Austin.

Councilman Clark led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilman Boone and Attorney Andy Welch not present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA –

Mayor Greer asked for a motion. Councilman Shearouse made the motion to approve the agenda.

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| RESULT | APPROVED |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN SHEAROUSE |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN CLARK |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – ALL IN FAVOR |

Continue with item remaining from Monday, September 29 Agenda.

5. Introduction of FY 2026 Budget –

Tim reviewed the expected taxes and revenues and discussion took place. Mostly discussed continued increase in property taxes with development along with increase in occupation tax if approved.

6. General Fund Operating Needs (Elected Officials to Community Development) FY 2026 –

Tim reviewed the employee benefits guide and said open enrollment opens next Friday, 9:00am – 1:00pm at the Public Safety Building. We will see a 6.58 percent increase overall in benefits with no increase in premiums for employees.

Tim discussed 81 Carter Lane and asked the council to give input about using as rental property or other purposes at some point. Mayor Greer mentioned that the city hall parking lot needs repairs and discussion about paving in front of the police department and city hall. Tim suggested adding to the paving contractor for the [side] parking at city hall. Discussion took place and the council agreed to move forward with paving.

7. Police Presentation –

The chief reviewed power point slides on the screen of his department overview and needs. Requesting two additional officers and discussion about increasing pay to \$56,481.11 [7.5%, which is a three-step increase] that would only affect five employees. Discussion about COLA increase versus merit increases and keeping up with other jurisdictions. The mayor asked how the city can keep up with [larger scale] agencies. Tim said possibly reclassifying to Step 18 versus Step 17.

Councilman Breedlove said we increased the salary budget in 2023 by \$500,000. Daunté asked how to retain and draw in qualified employees.

Break at 10:39am, returned at 10:57am.

8. Capital Needs – General Fund / Capital Funds FY 2026 -

Tim said this would be an area for Jack to increase storage for city equipment. It's 9.9 acres, and Phase I would include clearing, grading, power, and fence for a storage barn. It could be a SPLOST item and long-term item. The property has been for sale for a while. Jack said the property is \$40,000/acre to do all the work needed. Councilman Clark asked if we would drill an additional well due to water shortage. Tim said we would need to consider another option due to the cyclical nature of groundwater sources and that a water plant might meet our needs.

Further, Tim said another capital need is a Hydro Vac truck purchase, and we need to choose one so that we can submit the quote to United Bank and hopefully do a seven-year loan. Also need a trash truck and a crane truck. We've had issues with power at public works and cost to supplement with permanent backup generator at a cost of \$84,000, or another option is \$19,000 for battery backup, which is feasible now.

9. Request for financial assistance – HC Tax and Tag office –

We received a request from the henry county tax commissioner for the city to pay for certain needs at their new tag office. They are requesting we pay for security and \$1.2 million from us for other needs. The council does not agree and consensus is “no”.

10. Website Update / Revision options –

We have been working with our former website representatives with Granicus and inquired with Civic Plus who oversees our Municode. Civic Plus is less expensive and would also allow us to do agenda creation. The council authorized Tim to proceed with Civic Plus.

11. Hotel/Motel Items (DDA, HPC, Main Street Presentation) –

Colleen reviewed a power point presentation and reviewed priorities for 2026 [investment, businesses, jobs, events/engagement, notable projects]. Colleen said there was damage at the train platform and discussion took place. Tim reallocated \$14,000 from train platform to city park. Discussion about informational kiosks,

three-sided would be \$6,000 each and asking for \$12,500 total. Warren Holder agreed to allow the city to use and improve the space beside the building [the city] purchased until it officially becomes ours. The idea is an art park and reviewed ideas and said the budget for this would be \$35,000. Tim said we would need to transfer money from Hotel/Motel to DDA through MOU with guidelines. Colleen also asked about doing art on the Cleveland Street crosswalk, for \$5,000. Discussion that we will be repaving that area, and Breedlove asked if we could inquire with local art students about doing it. Discussion about DDA owned vacant lot and having a semi-permanent pop-up market area. Breedlove suggested providing a permanent structure with space on the inside. Shearouse said we need to improve the dumpster enclosures for downtown businesses and discussion took place. Suggestions on requiring businesses to use a centralized or consolidated dumpster with nice enclosures to eliminate the individual dumpster use. Colleen said she wants to make the train platform area into another park and presented ideas. Tim said maybe do landscaping for now and hold off on other ideas. Further, Colleen said the events committee has \$19,000 to spend and the chief would like to consider doing away with events committee since we will be hiring someone in that role.

12. Water/Sewer – Sanitation – Stormwater Funds –

Tim reviewed the budget including expense and revenues. Misty mentioned that we currently only charge a base fee/usage for hydrant meters and asked if we can start charging a monthly fee. Tim said yes, he will incorporate that into the budget.

We need to do an increase for water and sewer charges by five percent for water, and three percent for sewer charges effective January 1, 2026. Rates since 2019 (our last increase) have increased by 26 percent. Also, we need to increase stormwater fee to \$46.21.

13. Water/Sewer/Capital Plans (Plant expansion – future needs) –

No need for discussion right now.

14. Stormwater / Sanitation Enterprise Funds –.

Discussion about Lift Station improvements [South Ola, Richmond Park] with a new force main. We need a slope mower for stormwater ponds [maybe in the future]. The cost for one of those is \$46,000.

15. Presentation on Ticon Zoom and Analysis –

Arthur Stepanyan, present to review details about Ticon Zoom software. Tim said they agreed to do a free traffic analysis and the cost is normally \$2,500. This software will show data on vehicles that travel through areas and provide data. Councilman Shearouse asked who could use the data to do anything with it. Tim said we could provide the data to GDOT. Discussion and review of areas in Locust Grove and congestion damage analysis. Arthur said it's a new product and we will achieve accurate results. The council authorized Tim to sign the agreement for the free trial.

Break at 2:51pm, returned at 3:10pm.

16. Software – Nearmap and Placer.ai

Tim reviewed and discussion took place.

17. Sanitation RFP update –

Misty discussed possibility of utilizing the WM App (call center) for customer complaints versus being directed to our staff. It's not part of our contract now and would be additional cost. Also, what are the pros

and cons if WM did direct billing for us and the city gets franchise tax. Tim said it wouldn't benefit us because there would not be enough franchise revenue in return for us.

18. SPLOST and T-SPLOST Funds 2026 (T-SPLOST II proposed projects) –

Tim reviewed SPLOST and T-SPLOST projects including Peeksville Connector, Leguin Mill, Indian Creek and Tanger roundabout, the intersection at Market Place/Tanger, connector from Colvin Drive to Bethlehem Road, Peeksville design and remainder for the Hwy 42 corridor downtown. T-SPLOST II, 2026 could focus on trails and transportation infrastructure.

19. Strategic Plan –

Tim said he will inquire with GMA or Carl Vinson for quotes to help with the process.

20. Youth Council 2025 – 2026 -

Discussion took place about partnering with schools and the mayor said GMA has it all outlined. We hope to have implemented by first quarter of 2026.

21. Personnel Policy (Hours/Remote Work/Uniform/Housing) –

Tim said we offer a 457 plan currently with [The Standard] and have \$2 million in that fund. We are transitioning from The Standard to Voya but there will be an initial fee.

Tim said we need to consider whether Carter Lane will be used for office space or rental property. If we turn over to the DDA, they will have to oversee the ordinance and discussion took place. The other city owned property is intended to be used as affordable housing option for employees. Tim reviewed the considerations for ranking and discussion took place. The council and staff agreed to not allow pets and add to the policy.

Discussion about the uniform policy and Tim said it's still a work in progress.

The policy doesn't specify hours of day for operation and needs to be specified 8:00 am-5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Of course, this will exclude police department except for office staff and the wastewater plant personnel (which will be specified). Tim said we do not have a remote work program in the policy. The mayor said we need to generate a policy and specify who it would be eligible. Tim said MS Teams meetings work very well, and the mayor authorized Tim to research and give feedback.

22. Wrap up from Day 1 and Day 2 –

Reviewed recap of day 1 and day 2.

Mayor Greer asked for a motion to adjourn.

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| RESULT | ADOPTED |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN BREEDLOVE |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN SHEAROUSE |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – MEETING ADJOURNED @ 4:40 PM |

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 1, 2025

Mayor Greer called the meeting to order at 8:00am

Invocation given by Community Development Director, Daunté Gibbs.

Councilman Taylor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilman Boone not present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA –

Mayor Greer asked for a motion. Councilman Breedlove made the motion to amend the agenda to add items 26, 27, and 28.

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| RESULT | APPROVED ITEMS 26, 27, 28 |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN BREEDLOVE |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN SHEAROUSE |
| VOTE | MOTION CARRIED - ALL IN FAVOR |

Mayor Greer asked for a motion. Councilman Breedlove made the motion to approve the agenda as amended.

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| RESULT | APPROVED AS AMENDED |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN BREEDLOVE |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN SHEAROUSE |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – ALL IN FAVOR |

23. Day One (Downtown – City Hall – Transportation) –

Tim said he amended the 2026 general fund reserve fund use from \$1.2 million to \$204,470. The city’s reserve is \$6.2 million [minus any commitments]. This \$204,000 is all that is dipping into the reserve. LMIG is included in this from the previous three years and must be spent on paving.

Tim discussed the plan review on the projector screen and said we could work with the county on replacement of the gym by use of future SPLOST. The mayor said [the gym] is geared toward Henry County special needs. Tim said we could also have [it] as a focal point for the Heart of Locust Grove plan.

Tim reviewed transportation projects and said the New Bethlehem Interchange was designed to have a traffic signal but there will not be one. We will have to review prepping for a signal.

24. Day two (FY 2025 Budget – FY 2026 Budget – Capital Items/Funds –

The 2025 budget amendment will be on the agenda for the next council meeting. The 2026 budget is now balanced and will finalize getting all three trucks with United Bank. The plant expansion is coming within budget and will look at sanitation needs [are we losing or making money] and look at RFP and customer calls. Also, work on Blight Taxation [MOU between city and DDA] property transfer and payment and work on extended stay ordinance [aggressive panhandling].

25. Council discussion items (Code Enforcement - training – trash pickup)

Code Enforcement – The mayor said Councilman Boone had asked if code enforcement can work weekends or not. Tim asked Daunté to ask Brian and Justin if they can work a few hours on weekends. Daunté said Brian already works weekends and it left to their discretion based on calls. There is no difference in code enforcement citation numbers from weekday versus weekend days.

Councilman Breedlove said he thought Saturday was more for signs being picked up that are out of compliance. The mayor said it could be a Saturday or Sunday [there preference] and said the second code enforcement position was created for the purpose of working Skyland and weekends. Daunté said Skyland is a work in progress and discussion took place. The mayor said his understanding the second code officer would have flex weekends. Daunté said the directive given to code enforcement was for them to use their discretion. They have an entire city to manage, not just Skyland. Councilman Breedlove said if the second position was approved with the understanding of a weekend being worked, it should be put in place. Councilman Shearouse said it doesn't matter how we got to this point, if there is a need, then he agrees. Daunté said he knows if there is a need or not and there is no difference from weekdays or weekends because he has been monitoring over a period and said he doesn't see a need for it. The mayor said working one weekend a month will suffice. Tim said we can have them work once a month and report back actions. Tim asked if we needed to turn both code enforcement over to the chief. The mayor said if we don't respond, we will do disservice to those who elect us. The code enforcement job functions are not being questioned, and the question is do they need to work a weekend or not. Daunté said he feels like code enforcement is being picked on and the mayor said he is not picking. Councilwoman McCornell said she is big on needs assessment; however, we should try the weekend schedule through the end of year. We need to let them enforce the code and not focus on signs. The consensus from the council is to have each code officer alternate and work once per month. The chief said having them go face-to-face and not just leaving a note on the door of the violation results in a better reaction. Daunté said he will have each pick a Saturday [eight-hour day] and take off a day during the week.

Councilwoman McCornell said we have department heads in place to do a job and the council needs to allow them to handle it. Any issues should be addressed to the respective department head.

Tim mentioned a tip line was installed at public safety, can we do that for the public for code enforcement. Discussion took place.

ADD ITEM –

26. City of Duluth presentation –

James Riker, City Manager for the City of Duluth, GA gave a PowerPoint presentation. Discussion about downtown Duluth in year 2000 and progress to date. Mayor Whitlock said he is glad that the City of Locust Grove chose Duluth for accommodating retreat meeting needs. He said they took advantage of opportunities when opportunities came about and partnered with the right people.

Break at 10:15am, returned at 10:35am.

27. Resolution of purchase and sale agreement with Growing Space, LLC –

Mayor Greer asked for a motion. Councilman Shearouse made the motion to approve the request by approving resolution **#25-10-080**

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| RESULT | APPROVED RESOLUTION #25-10-080 |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN SHEAROUSE |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN CLARK |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – FOUR IN FAVOR (SHEAROUSE, TAYLOR, CLARK, MCCORNELL) ONE OPPOSED (BREEDLOVE) AND ONE ABSENT (BOONE) |

28. Reversion of Conditional Use at Bethlehem Road, Zip Hinton –

Mayor Greer asked for a motion. Councilman Taylor made the motion to approve the request.

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| RESULT | APPROVED |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN TAYLOR |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN BREEDLOVE |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – ALL IN FAVOR |

EXECUTIVE SESSION - PERSONNEL

Motion to go into executive session to discuss personnel by Councilman Breedlove and seconded by Councilwoman McCornell. Motion Carried All in favor 11:28 AM.

At 12:02 PM, motion to come back into regular session made by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilman Shearouse.

Mayor Greer asked for a motion to adjourn.

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| RESULT | ADOPTED |
| MADE MOTION | COUNCILMAN BREEDLOVE |
| 2 ND MOTION | COUNCILMAN SHEAROUSE |
| FAVOR | MOTION CARRIED – MEETING ADJOURNED @ 12:02 PM |

Notes taken by:

Misty Spurling, City Clerk