



CITY OF STATESBORO
COUNCIL MINUTES
MARCH 4, 2025

Regular Meeting

50 E. Main St. City Hall Council Chambers

9:00 AM

1. Call to Order

Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the meeting to order

2. Invocation and Pledge

Councilmember Paulette Chavers gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ATTENDANCE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jonathan McCollar	Mayor	Present	
Tangie Johnson	Councilmember	Present	
Paulette Chavers	Councilmember	Present	
Ginny Hendley	Councilmember	Present	
John Riggs	Councilmember	Present	
Shari Barr	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	

Other staff present: City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, Public Affairs Manager Layne Phillips, City Attorney Cain Smith and City Clerk Leah Harden

3. Public Comments (Agenda Item): None

4. Consideration of a Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

A) Approval of Minutes

- a) **02-18-2025 Work Session Minutes**
- b) **02-18-2025 Council Minutes**
- c) **02-18-2025 Executive Session Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the consent agenda.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

5. Consideration of a motion to approve a Memorandum of Understanding with St. Joseph’s Candler (SJC) to provide oncology services to disadvantaged individuals in the Statesboro area.

A motion was made to approve a Memorandum of Understanding with St. Joseph’s Candler (SJC) to provide oncology services to disadvantaged individuals in the Statesboro area.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

6. Consideration of a motion to approve an award of contract in the amount of \$246,306.00 to Tim Lanier Construction LLC for Anderson Street Roadway Improvements. The project will be paid from 2023 TSPLOST funds.

A motion was made to approve an award of contract in the amount of \$246,306.00 to Tim Lanier Construction LLC for Anderson Street Roadway Improvements. The project will be paid from 2023 TSPLOST funds.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

7. Other Business from City Council

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr encouraged everyone to get out and vote.

8. City Managers Comments

City Manager Charles Penny reviewed a few items in the FYI packet the first item is the Statesboro Fire Department in partnership with the American Red Cross will be conducting a Smoke Alarm Blitz on Saturday March 29, 2025. The focus area is Kingswood Ave, Lydia Ln and Wilburn Cir. Second item is that thanks to hiring bonuses the Police Department has been able to eliminate vacancies, which leads to the discontinuation of these bonuses effective March 1, 2025. The third item is about the new fire truck, which was recently inspected in Ohio and is due to arrive this month. The last item Mr. Penny addressed in the FYI packet was an issue an elderly customer had with their water bill. There were six months of significantly high usage that totaled over \$4,000. There was a leak in the upstairs bathroom, which caused the increase. Per city policy staff can only adjust three months’ worth of the utility bill. Mr. Penny asked for council’s approval to be able to adjust the remaining three months.

Mr. Penny recognized Director of Public Utilities Steve Hotchkiss for his 36 years of service before his retirement in June. He also announced the resignation of Public Works and Engineering Director John Washington.

A motion was made to approve the City Manager’s request to provide relief for the citizen in regards to her water bill.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember Paulette Chavers
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

Mr. Penny stated the City of Statesboro has provided fire protection in the fire district for more than 47 years. Since the last Fire Committee meeting on January 30, 2025, there has been quite a bit of information out there and some of it is misinformation. Mr. Penny stated that Fire Chief Tim Grams asked if he could publicly share some information to make sure the public has the correct information. He called on Chief Grams to make a presentation.

Statesboro Fire Chief Tim Grams began by saying, “the Fire District has been the center of a lot of conversations over the past few weeks and I have received a lot of questions regarding the recent decision made by the Bulloch County commissioners to take over responsibility of providing fire services within the Fire District. The Statesboro Fire Department is disappointed that we will no longer be providing services within the Fire District after June 30, 2025. The department respects the County’s decision and we truly hope they are successful in their endeavor. My intentions today are not to debate this decision nor to persuade the Commissioners to reconsider but rather share some facts, provide information, and correct some inaccurate information being circulated. I also want to reassure the citizens of Statesboro that the county’s decision will not affect their service levels within the city.”

Chief Grams began his presentation by beginning with a general overview: At the December 3rd Bulloch County Commissioner’s meeting the board voted unanimously to terminate the Statesboro Fire District agreement. The City was not aware nor given any prior notice of the county’s intentions to terminate the agreement. No concerns regarding fire service delivery were communicated prior to terminating the agreement. The Bulloch County Fire Chief stated that the current agreement was “not Bulloch County Friendly”. The current millage rate for the Statesboro Fire District is 2.7 mills and the rate for the Bulloch County Rural Fire District is 3 mills. The Statesboro Fire Department currently hold a “Flat” Class 2 ISO PPC where the County Fire Department holds a “Split” Class 4/4Y ISO PPC. The Bulloch County Fire Chief also mentioned that the current agreement did not allow Bulloch County to build fire stations in the Fire District. This was intended to prevent duplication of services and could have been addressed if the county had communicated its intentions of assuming responsibility for the Fire District. The county indicated on numerous occasions that they had no plans to assume responsibility for the Fire District when asked directly by the City. Additionally the county did not raise any concerns when asked if there were any issues and/or problems regarding fire service delivery within the Fire District. At the January 30th Fire District Committee meeting the County presented a plan that would split the fire district. The county would cover the northern portion of the Fire District and the City would cover the southern portion. In addition, the county would receive 52% of revenues leaving 48% to the city. The city had no prior knowledge that this plan was being presented and the county wanted a decision by the City as to whether they would or would not accept the plan by February 17th. This was not adequate time for the City to review the County’s proposal and discuss with City Council.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is a private company that provides data, underwriting, and risk management to insurance companies. ISO assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPC) score of 1 (Exceptional Fire Protection) through 10 (Unprotected). PPC scores are based on the following criteria, Emergency communications, Fire Department capabilities, and water supply. There are two type of classifications “Flat” and “Split” A “flat” classification (2) means that all properties within 5 road miles of a fire station receives the ISO classification regardless of the property’s proximity to a credible water source. A “split” classification (4/4Y) means that properties within 5 road miles of a fire station must also be within 1000 feet of a creditable water source in order to receive the Class 4 and properties within 5 road miles of a fire station that are not within 1000 feet of a creditable water source receive the 4Y.

There have been a tremendous amount of inaccurate and misleading information disseminated which has led to confusion within the community. During the County’s Town Hall meeting on February 25th it was stated that there is no clause in

the agreement that allows us to renegotiate the terms. The only way to renegotiate was to terminate the agreement. On the contrary, the agreement allows terms to be amended by written approval of both parties and either party may terminate the agreement prior to the expiration date of the five-year term by providing twelve months' written notice of termination to the other party. Another statement was "the price per call in the fire district was approximately \$6000. This on top of automatic aid makes the cost prohibitive to continue the agreement."

The \$6000 per call is a misleading representation of the services and benefits received. Lower insurance premiums because of ISO classification, response times, and property loss vs. property saved, community education, and risk reduction are all factors when considering the value of fire service levels. Regardless of which fire department services the fire district, the funding generated vs the number of fire calls are going to be the same. The current Automatic Aid agreement between the city and county is separate from the Fire District Agreement. In 2024, there were 64 structure fires in the city and 25 in the fire district. No tankers from Bulloch County responded within the fire district engines only. In addition, Statesboro responded to 52 structure fires in Bulloch County outside the fire district of those 24 were cancelled while enroute, of the remaining 28, Statesboro arrived on the scene first and/or initiated the primary fire attack on 9 which equates to 32%.

One commissioner stated, "We have been talking about this for years, the city knew this was coming". In October 2022 during the Fire District committee meeting City Manager Charles Penny addressed rumors regarding the County having an interest in taking over the Fire District. The county manager at the time Tom Couch stated, "if the county decided to pursue the Fire District in the future there would be a great deal of notice given." In addition, Chairman Thompson stated "we have enough on our plates trying to build up the rural fire district and the only way the county would pull away from the agreement would be if the City make us by no longer wanting to provide the service. While Mr. Couch and Mr. Thompson are no longer with the County, the City was under the impression that the County had no desire to pursue assuming responsibility for the Fire District. There have been accusations that the Statesboro Fire Department has not been providing all the services per the agreement (i.e. fire inspections). Back in 2019, the city expressed concerns about the need for fire prevention and protection ordinances within the Fire District in order to conduct fire inspections as well as better define the Statesboro Fire Department's authority to enforce fire codes within this area. The county elected not to pursue this recommendation and chose to assume the responsibility for fire code enforcement within the Fire District. Current Bulloch County Chairman suggested that the City's motives regarding servicing the Fire District have been for financial gain and that the City has no desire to help the county. The Statesboro Fire Department has always provided the highest level of services within the Fire district with the only motive being to protect life and property. During the January 30th Fire Committee Meeting it was said that the County needed the funding for the Fire District in order to build up fire services throughout the county.

Mayor McCollar stated that negotiations have not taken place between the city and the county about the fire district. When we arrived at the January 30th meeting the county told us what their plans were and gave us about two weeks to respond to their plan. After assessing the proposed plan, the city's response was that two weeks is not enough time for Council and staff to get on the same page and we will discuss it at the retreat in March.

Mayor Pro Tem asked if automatic aid was a part of the Fire District agreement.

Fire Chief Grams answered no; automatic aid is a separate agreement.

Mayor Pro Tem asked further about the agreement what's going to happen with it, when does it expire and what's going to happen June 30th with that agreement.

Fire Chief Grams stated the automatic aid agreement automatically renews unless canceled before June 30 2025. When it was very beneficial throughout county for all citizens in both departments. If we are no longer serving the fire district it may not be in the City's best interest to continue automatic aid. However, I am an advocate of maintaining a Mutual aid agreement because both departments are going to experience incidents that are beyond their capabilities. We certainly want to maintain a good working relationship with the county.

City Manager Charles Penny stated he recommends that we not continue automatic aid. If the city were not protecting the fire district automatic aid would mean that the citizens of Statesboro would be subsidizing fire protection in the county. We will have further discussion about automatic aid at the Council Retreat next week.

9. Public Comments (General):

Annie Bellinger stated she has been in the Johnson Street neighborhood for many years and spoke her efforts to keep the Johnson Street area drug free. She expressed frustration over attempts to remove her from the area. She stated she is going to remain in the neighborhood and continuing to work to keep the drugs out.

10. Consideration of a Motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss “Personnel Matters” in accordance with O.C.G.A 50-14-3(b).

At 10:10 am a motion was made to enter into Executive Session.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
AYES:	Johnson, Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

At 10:20 am a motion was made to exit Executive Session

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Tangie Johnson
AYES:	Johnson, Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

11. Consideration of a Motion to Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn.

RESULT:	Approved (Unanimous)
MOVER:	Councilmember John Riggs
SECONDER:	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
AYES:	Johnson, Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
ABSENT:	

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 am.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

