

BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
JANUARY 28, 2026 5:52 P.M.
CITY HALL 21 N. AVONDALE PLAZA

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor
Graham Reiney, Mayor Pro Tem
Michael Smith, Commissioner
Luis Suazo, Commissioner

Members Absent: Lyda Steadman, Commissioner

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager
Shannon Powell, Assistant City Manager
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney
Karina Reyna, City Clerk
Harry Hess, Chief of Police
Jerry Branch, Deputy Chief of Police
Brittany Marmol, Director of Finance and Administrative Services
Marcel Jackson, Director of Public Works, Parks and Sanitation
Ellen Powell, Creative, Marketing & Communications Director
Adriana Holt, Senior Marketing and Communications Coordinator
Isabella Salazar, Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:52 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Luis Suazo motioned to adopt the meeting agenda. Commissioner Michael Smith seconded the motion. The motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Review of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Atlanta Regional Commission for assistance with the Local Comprehensive Plan Update

The Board reviewed a memorandum of agreement with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) to assist with the update of the City's Comprehensive Plan. City Manager Patrick Bryant explained that this update, along with the Downtown Master Plan update, is included in the City's capital planning program and will be undertaken in the coming year. The ARC will provide a project manager and liaison to facilitate the process and perform a significant portion of the plan preparation, while City staff will provide data, feedback, and support to ensure that the plan meets all state requirements for comprehensive plans.

This agreement is standard and like previous agreements with ARC for comprehensive plan updates, and there is no associated fee. The steering committee will include ARC staff as well as participants selected by City staff. The vote for this item is scheduled for the next meeting on February 11th. No questions were raised regarding the agreement at this time.

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Review of the Public Meeting Process

The Board discussed potential updates to the City’s public meeting procedures to improve efficiency and clarity. Mayor Jonathan Elmore noted that while changes have been made over the years, additional adjustments are being considered. Proposed changes include moving public comments to the beginning of regular meetings, after commissioner comments, allowing citizens to address all agenda items at once with a three-minute per speaker limit, and eliminating public comment during work sessions, which are intended for Board discussion and staff presentations. Mayor Elmore emphasized that public comment is a dedicated time for citizens to express their views, with responses or follow-up provided after the meeting if needed. The changes are intended to streamline meetings, reduce confusion about when comments are allowed, and maintain compliance.

Mayor Pro Tem Graham Reiney further discussed improvements to the City’s public meeting process, emphasizing accessibility, fairness, and more meaningful dialogue with residents. One proposal Mayor Pro Tem Reiney recommends is to implement a mandatory break between the regular meeting and the work session to allow informal interactions between commissioners, staff, and the public, creating a less formal environment for conversation. He also recommended that the Board move from the dais to a table setup, like during retreats, to encourage better eye contact, discussion, and collaboration among commissioners and staff.

The Board also discussed expanding “Commissioner Chats,” informal meetings held outside regular sessions, as a way for residents to share input on city matters, including issues from prior work sessions, upcoming projects, or general observations. This format allows commissioners to hear concerns before formal deliberation and ensures that public comments are treated equally, with consistent time limits and follow-up opportunities. City Manager Bryant affirmed that these adjustments would meet technical requirements for recording.

The discussion concluded with general agreement on the proposed changes, emphasizing two key points: ensuring all members of the public are treated equally during meetings, and using Commissioner Chats as a more effective venue for dialogue outside formal meetings. Staff confirmed their support for facilitating these informal chats and being available during the proposed break between the regular meeting and work session, which is suggested to last 10–15 minutes to allow time for informal conversations. Attorney Stephen Quinn noted that public comments at the beginning of regular meetings is typical in many cities, while work sessions generally either have limited public comment or none, as they are intended for board discussion and deliberation. Finally, because Commissioner Steadman was absent, the Board agreed to revisit and finalize these proposals at a future session, ensuring full participation before implementing changes.

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

Commissioner Luis Suazo motioned to adjourn the Work Session. Commissioner Michael

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Smith seconded the motion. The motion was APPROVED unanimously. The Work Session adjourned at 6:22 pm.

Karina Reyna, City Clerk