

The City Council of the City of Harlem, Georgia held a Called Meeting on Friday, May 15, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. at Harlem City Hall with Mayor Roxanne Whitaker presiding.

Present: COUNCIL: Mayor Roxanne Whitaker, Mayor Pro tem Gregg Stokes, Councilmember Joshua Brantley, Councilmember Dustin Driggers, and Councilmember Steve Pokrywka; STAFF: City Manager Debra Moore, City Clerk Leona Holley, and City Attorney Adam Nelson.

PURPOSE: City Council Quarterly Work Session

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Whitaker at 8:35 a.m.

The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was given and led by Attorney Nelson.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Turnipseed Project Updates: City Manager Moore reported on the following information that was provided by Engineer John McClellan with Turnipseed Engineers:

- **Public Works Building Project** – As of March the Public Works Building Project was 62% complete. To date, the contractor has completed the site work and matted slopes. The water and sewer connections have been installed. Currently, the contractor is focused inside the building framing the interior. City Manager Moore commented that there have been several change orders with the project. The most recent change order involves the heating system. She explained that a part of the building was originally planned to be heated even though heating was not necessary for some of the area. Extending a gas line to the building would cost an additional \$20,000 to \$25,000. As a result, the project was changed to make the building fully electric, with the backup generator operating on propane gas. There still will be a back-up generator installed at Fire Station 2 which will be on natural gas. The projected completion date for the project is July or August. City Manager Moore commented that an easement will be needed from Georgia Power for them to get service to the property. The consideration of the easement will go to Council at the May 26th meeting for approval.
- **Multi-Purpose Park Project** – As of March the Multi-Purpose Park Project is 13% complete. To date, the contractor has cleared and rough graded the site. The building footings have been poured.
- **Shady Grove Paving Project** – The Shady Grove Paving Project is being advertised, and the bid opening will be on May 29, 2026. This project covers streets in Shady Grove. Funding for this project is a combination of 2024, 2025 and 2026 LMIG funding (\$132,000) with matching funds coming from the TSPLOST Fund. The total estimated project cost is \$432,500.
- **N. Fairview Drive Paving Project** – The N. Fairview Drive Paving Project will be an LRA-LMIG Project. Turnipseed Engineering is in the process of preparing a preliminary cost estimate for paving N. Fairview Drive from:
 - a. W. Forrest Street to the new pavement near Sawdust Road
 - b. N. Hicks Street to W. Forrest Street

The proposed funding for this project will be the 2026 LRA-LMIG grant funds of \$67,756 plus SPLOST funds. City Manager Moore stated that the funds will need to be applied for by June 15th and a decision will need to be made regarding which portion of the project will be designated for funding.

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

City Park Project – Next Phase: City Manager Moore reported the Green Phase of the City Park Project has been completed. Discussion was given on the next phases for the City Park. Council was in support of the Blue Phase. Blue Phase consists of renovations to Field 1, pickle ball courts, the basketball court, and tennis court along with additional parking. Discussion was also given on doing half basketball courts instead of full basketball courts with benches in between the two sections of the court. Mayor Whitaker commented that previously the Cemetery Committee approached Council about doing a project with them for parking on a lot at the cemetery that is close to the park. Mayor Whitaker asked if this could be turned into parking. Attorney Nelson explained that if Council wanted to do use the property, an agreement could be structured as a long-term lease for parking purposes rather than transferring ownership through a title. City Manager Moore will reach out to Johnson, Laschober & Associates to see about getting an updated cost estimate for the next phase of the park.

N. Fairview Drive: Mayor Whitaker received information from Police Chief Lewis pertaining to accidents on N. Fairview Drive. The majority of the accidents are in Columbia County and not within the city limits. Discussion was given about having a three-way stop at the intersection of Sawdust Road and N. Fairview Drive. Chief Lewis indicated to Mayor Whitaker that he would contact Randy Prickett with Columbia County Traffic Engineers regarding this. A traffic study will need to be done on this. There was also discussion on speeding on N. Fairview Drive, speed limit digital signs for the area and acquiring the price of flashing speed signs.

Legislative Updates – SB 33: Mayor Whitaker gave an update on the following Legislative bills that recently passed:

- SB 33 – Property Tax Reform
- SB 447 – Land Disturbance Permits, Revise Issuance Process
- SB 566 – Property Taxes, Revise Notice of Assessment
- HB 651 – School Zone Speed Cameras

She commented that HB 521 – Annexations – Prohibit Certain Jurisdictions did not pass.

250th Anniversary Event: Discussion was given on the 250th Independence Anniversary event. Discussion included a concert with fireworks afterwards at the old football field and new Multi-Use Park property. The dates that were discussed for the event were June 27th or July 11th. Councilmember Brantley stated several people have already said they would make a donation for the fireworks event. Discussion was also given on events for Harlem. Mayor Pro tem Stokes commented that it seems the size of the Oliver Hardy Festival seems to be getting smaller each year.

Consent Agendas: City Manager Moore reviewed the rules of procedure from the City of Harlem Charter and Code of Ordinances and stated the City follows Roberts Rules of Order. Attorney Nelson explained instead of voting on each item individually Council passes all of the items together with one single motion and vote. If a Councilmember has a question on an item, this item can be brought out of the work session and placed on the regular agenda for discussion.

Property Maintenance: Councilmember Pokrywka has concerns about properties that are not maintained such as grass, trash, large fences, etc. Attorney Nelson explained that the nuisance ordinance is state law, and the city ordinances references state law. There is not a lot more you can add or take away. Attorney

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

Property Maintenance (cont'd): Nelson stated it sounds like the concerns are more of a code enforcement issue. Discussion can be held with the Code Enforcement Officer and the Planning Department on what Council would like to focus on. Attorney Nelson suggested keeping a running list and talking with code enforcement. If the offender does not comply it will need to go to Municipal Court.

Social Media – Source for Newsletter, Meetings & Events: Discussion was given on placing events, meetings, and newsletters on social media. City Manager Moore explained that meetings, the newsletter, and calendars are on the city's website, and the newsletter is sent out with the utility bills. She stated she tries to place events on the city's website as well. Suggestions were made regarding placing information for events, meetings, and newsletters on social media because more people look at social media.

The Council took a lunch break from 12:00 pm to 12:35 p.m.

Executive Session: Councilmember Brantley made the motion to go into Executive Session; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Brantley, Driggers, Pokrywka, and Stokes voting in the affirmative. Executive Session opened at 12:35 p.m.

Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to come out of Executive Session; 2nd by Councilmember Pokrywka. The motion carried with Councilmembers Brantley, Driggers, Pokrywka, and Stokes voting in the affirmative. Executive Session closed at 1:15 p.m.

Attorney Nelson reported that there was one litigation and one personnel matter discussed, and no final action was taken.

Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the Affidavit acknowledging this report; 2nd by Councilmember Brantley. The motion carried with Councilmembers Brantley, Driggers, Pokrywka, and Stokes voting in the affirmative.

HVAC Service Agreements: City Manager Moore reviewed the current HVAC agreements with Council. Currently the City of Harlem uses Doc Savage for HVAC services for several of the city's buildings. The service was originally through Augusta Air Associates and started with them in May of 2014. In February 2020 Augusta Air Associates merged with Doc Savage. There have been no complaints or issues with the service. The technician that services the city's buildings was originally with Augusta Air Associates and he is still with Doc Savage. He and his family are from Harlem. City Manager Moore commented the city also uses Coleman Services for the HVAC service for the Public Safety Building. There was discussion about giving local business the opportunity to bid on contracts for the HVAC Service Agreements.

Axon Enterprise Proposal – BWC & Tasers: City Manager Moore reported Police Chief Lewis provided the following information pertaining to pricing for a proposed camera and Taser package from Axon Enterprise:

- The total cost for the bundling of the Taser and body camera systems is \$144,413 over a five-year period; averages \$28,882.60 annually. The vendor advised that approximately \$10,000 in applicable discounts may be available if both systems are purchased together as a bundled package. The cost for the software program, cloud storage through evidence.com, cameras, and training is \$56,122 over a five-year period, which averages \$11,224.40 annually.

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

Axon Enterprise Proposal – BWC & Tasers (cont'd): Currently the body worn camera footage is downloaded to a device for storage. Chief Lewis also provided information that the Taser X26 units that are currently in service are no longer supported or serviced by Taser due to the age of the devices, they are considered outdated, and Taser no longer provides liability coverage for those units. If Council wants to proceed, the quote will expire on July 15, 2026. After discussion, City Manager Moore will look to see if funding is available for this year, or if it needs to be budgeted for next year. Attorney Nelson is favorable to be more cautious, providing more coverage for law enforcement.

Attorney Nelson left the meeting at 1:50 p.m. for an appointment.

Episcopal Children's Services 4Kids – Headstart – Contract Renewal: City Manager Moore explained she was contacted by the Procurement Manager for Episcopal Children's Services 4Kids, asking for a potential three-year lease instead of a one-year lease for the Headstart building. The funds are paid through grants. The agreement was sent to the city's attorneys for review. After discussion, City Manager Moore was asked to find out if this is a one year or three-year grant before voting on the contract renewal agreement.

Developmental Plans for Employees: Moved to Executive Session.

Financial Update – As of 04/30/2026: City Manager Moore provided Council with the financial reports through April 30, 2026. She gave an update on the 2025 audit.

Other: Mayor Whitaker informed Council that the city owns a parcel of property located at the corner of Paschal Street and W. Forrest Street. She asked Council to consider what needs to be done with the property.

Items from Executive Session: N/A

With there being nothing further for discussion, Councilmember Brantley made a motion to adjourn the meeting; 2nd by Councilmember Driggers. The motion carried with Councilmembers Brantley, Driggers, Pokrywka, and Stokes voting in the affirmative. The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley
City Clerk