

The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Newnan, Georgia was held on Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 6:30p.m. in the Richard A. Bolin Council Chambers of City Hall with Mayor James Shepherd presiding.

PRESENT

Mayor James Shepherd: Council members present: Scott Berta, Jim Thomasson, Jennifer Morrison, Cynthia Jenkins, Paul Guillaume and Dustin Koritko. Also present: City Manager, Cleatus Phillips; Assistant City Manager, Hasco Craver; Assistant City Manager, Meg Kelsey and City Clerk, Megan Shea. Absent - City Attorney, Brad Sears.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Shepherd called the meeting to order. Pastor Jimmy Ellison from Newnan City Church delivered the invocation.

READING OF MINUTES

A. Minutes from the Regular Meeting on March 10, 2026

Motion by Councilwoman Jenkins, seconded by Councilman Guillaume to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting on March 10, 2026, and adopt them as presented.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Berta to amend the minutes from the March 10, 2026, meeting to reflect that on items A, D, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N and O no discussion was allowed after a motion and second was made. Mayor Shepherd stated that the amendment was out of order. Mayor Pro Tem Berta called parliamentary inquiry and appealed the chairman's decision. Seconded by Councilwoman Morrison.

Mayor Shepherd called the vote on the first motion to adopt the minutes as presented. Opposed: Berta, Thomasson, Morrison, Koritko, Guillaume.

MOTION FAILED. (2-5)

Mayor Shepherd called the vote for amended minutes to be approved. Opposed: Jenkins, Shepherd.

MOTION CARRIED. (5-2)

B. Minutes from Work Session on March 10, 2026

Item was read and there was no discussion.

Motion by Councilman Guillaume, seconded by Councilman Thomasson to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Work Session on March 10, 2026 and adopt them as presented.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

C. 1 Appointment – Christmas Commission, 3-year term

Continue to next agenda.

D. 1 Appointment – Development Authority, 4-year term

Continue to next agenda.

E. 1 Appointment – Youth Activities Commission, 3-year term

Item was read and there was no discussion.

Motion by Councilman Guillaume, seconded by Councilman Koritko to re-appoint Ann Chirhart for another term.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

Youth Council Attendees

Councilwoman Jenkins read the names of the members of the Newnan Youth Council who were in attendance. Gray Goldenberg, Ashlyn Mitchell and Ansley Lane.

REPORTS ON OPERATIONS BY CITY MANAGER

City Manager did not have anything.

REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR

Mayor Shepherd stated that, recognizing people were in attendance for the rezoning on First Avenue, he wanted everyone to inform everyone that the developers had requested to withdraw their application.

He also thanked the City Manager's office for all the work on the rezonings and minutes lately.

NEW BUSINESS

F. Public Hearing – Request by owner to Demolish Structure at 51 Jackson St.

Bryan Partin, Chief Building Official, said that the structure was built more than 50 years ago and is in a historic district, and considered to have architectural significance. It has been unoccupied for some time and is in disrepair. Mr. Partin gave further background information, as the structure had previously been the subject of substandard housing actions dating back to 1995.

Mayor Shepherd opened the public hearing.

Dr. Phillip Swords, property owner, gave copies of his public hearing affidavit and structural engineering reports to Council. He said he was trying to save this structure in 1995 when he served on the City Council. He has been maintaining the grounds for 20 years, but he did not have approval from the former owner to maintain the structure. About half of the property has been used as a parking lot for 56 Jefferson St. since 1955.

He did not realize the extent of the structural damage to this property until he bought it. The cost to bring the structure up to code would be about \$500,000. The kitchen is a total loss; the foundation is unstable and plumbing and electrical would need to be brought to code. He cannot secure the structure as it is now and that is a safety concern for the public. If approved for demolition, he would landscape the site appropriately.

Mayor Shepherd asked what the property is zoned? Mr. Phillips said it is zoned RU-1, which would allow residential only, either a single-family home or duplex with special exception, except for the portion grandfathered in that has been used for parking prior to zoning. Councilwoman Jenkins asked if an expansion of the parking lot would be allowed onto where the house sits? Mr. Phillips said it would not allow expansion for commercial purposes.

Councilman Thomasson asked how they know where the parking lot is or isn't? Mr. Swords and Mr. Phillips did not know and said there's never been a site survey. Councilman Thomasson said he would like to see that and there is a curb cut on Jackson and he would like that curb cut to not connect to the parking lot. Dr. Swords said it has always been connected. Councilman Thomasson expressed concern that a house would never be put there again, he said he wants to demise it and separate the parking lot from the house part. Councilwoman Jenkins asked if this is in a historic district, where anything built would have to get a architectural design certificate? Mr. Phillips confirmed that to be correct.

Mayor Pro Tem Berta asked if you enter from Jackson, can you cut all the way across to Jefferson? Mr. Swords said yes, it's been that way for many years. Mr. Phillips said the lot goes from Jackson to Jefferson. An aerial map of the property was shown from the City's website.

Opposition:

Ms. Cindy Eidson spoke in opposition. Ms. Eidson stated that she serves as Co-Chair on the Newnan Urban Redevelopment Agency (NURA) and she has worked at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Department of Economic Development and currently works with the Georgia Municipal Association in Economic Development. She said she has traveled the state extensively and there is a need to look at the integrity of housing stock. This house is 126 years old. Ms. Eidson said she has seen a lot of buildings in worse shape than this one.

She said in trying to preserve our historic character, our sense of place, maybe demolitions should be looked at and be required to state what is going to be built on the property. She also suggested a vacant property ordinance, to further help preserve historic properties in the city. She said she does not want to lose more of the city's historic fabric.

Dr. Swords again stated he did not know the structure was in bad shape until he bought it. He said it was a quick sale situation. He wishes it didn't have to come down but it is very expensive.

Mayor Shepherd closed the public hearing.

Councilman Guillaume said he understands the historic value, but it is a dilapidated house that's unsafe in a neighborhood. Councilwoman Jenkins asked what property the parking lot serves currently? Mr. Phillips said the dental office. Dr. Swords said it has been for 56 Jefferson, since 1955 when it was a gas station. Councilwoman Jenkins asked if a house was built on the property, would it be subdivided to keep the parking? Dr. Swords said he bought the land because it is his parking lot. He also owns 2 other nearby properties, in case he loses this parking lot. Councilwoman Jenkins asked if Dr. Swords would be willing to subdivide the property, keep the parking and then sell the rest to someone that wants to save the house? Dr. Swords said he tried to do that and had someone interested but then they never came back.

Mayor Pro Tem Berta asked if Dr. Swords would be willing to subdivide the property at a demise line, rezone the parking lot for commercial and then not allow access from the commercial through the residential. Dr. Swords said he would be willing to close the entrance until he figures out what the plan is for property.

Motion by Councilman Koritko, seconded by Councilman Guillaume to approve the request for demolition as presented. Opposed: Berta, Thomasson, Morrison. Roll call on vote – Berta, Thomasson, Morrison against and Shepherd, Jenkins, Koritko, Guillaume for.

MOTION CARRIED. (4-3)

Mayor Shepherd asked Dr. Swords to close off the entrance for the time being, as a safety measure.

G. Consideration of Project Framework Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for Pedestrian Facilities and Other Enhancements – Newnan Crossing Blvd from SR34 to Big Poplar Rd.

Michael Klahr, City Engineer, explained that this is for LINC sections 5-7, from Piedmont Hospital at Poplar Rd. to Bullsboro Dr. The project was estimated at \$981,330 and the grant from GDOT gives the city \$785,064, leaving the city with a cost of \$196,266.

Motion by Councilman Thomasson, seconded by Councilwoman Morrison to approve the agreement as presented.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

H. Request Authorization for staff to draft an ordinance to amend Code Sections 2-327 and 2-328 related to openings for Bids and RFP's

Mr. Phillips explained that this is looking for directions for staff. Staff would like to amend the procurement policy as it pertains to the opening of Invitations to Bid (ITB) and Requests for Proposals (RFP). Currently the policy says that the bids must be opened in the presence of two council members. There has been difficulty lately with scheduling and getting two council members to open the bids. Staff recommends an ordinance that would allow the bids to be opened in the presence of staff, then they are reviewed and final consideration is submitted to Council.

Councilman Thomasson asked about the \$50,000 threshold. Mr. Phillips said that was established in 2013 by Council. Councilman Thomasson commented that that number seems low and asked if it should be changed. Mr. Phillips said, given changes in law and with inflation, it is probably time to review that.

Council discussed adding the threshold change, looking at the whole section of the ordinance now and not having to revisit later.

Mayor Shepherd asked for a motion to call the question.

Motion by Councilwoman Morrison, seconded by Councilman Guillaume to call the question.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

I. Consideration of Request from Melissa Griffis on behalf of Imperium Development Partners, Inc. to continue Rezoning Request RZ2025-09 (Item J on the agenda) to the April 28, 2026 City Council Meeting

Request to continue was changed to request to withdraw application.

Motion by Mayor Shepherd, seconded by Councilman Guillaume to approve the request to withdraw zoning application RZ2025-09, submitted by Melissa D. Griffis, on behalf of Imperium Development, LLC and waive the 12-month resubmittal limitation as provided in section 10-14 of the zoning ordinance.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

Mayor Shepherd called for a re-vote as Councilmembers did want to discuss. Councilwoman Jenkins asked when would they be able to re-submit? Mr. Phillips said after the moratorium. Councilman Thomasson asked why the exception was being made? Mr. Phillips said it's been standard practice in the past with other withdrawals.

Motion by Mayor Shepherd, seconded by Councilwoman Jenkins to call the question.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

J. Public Hearing - Rezoning Request RZ2025-09 for 6.44+ acres at 25 1st Ave, 47 1st Ave, 7 4th St and 9 4th St. from ILT and RU-I to MXD

Withdrawn.

K. Public Hearing – Rezoning Request RZ2025-08, Parkland Homebuilders for 32+ acres off of Celebrate Life Parkway, from CCS to RMH

Dean Smith, Senior Planner, showed the project map and said that 150 units is now proposed, as a reduction from the original 220 units, which Planning Commission considered in January. The applicants have modified their concept plan, and staff did not have the opportunity to put this in the agenda packet ahead of the meeting.

The concept is a rental community, consisting of 57 3-bedroom stacked townhome/duplex units, 57 2-bedroom stacked units, 18 3-bedroom ranch-style attached dwelling units and 18 2-bedroom ranch style units. The overall density was reduced to about 5 units/acre. The site is currently undeveloped and mostly surrounded by commercial zoning districts and one apartment complex to the north. Future land use shows the property as mixed-use and business/office. Amenities proposed include green space, walking trail, picnic area, pool, pool cabana, dog park and LINC trail connection.

Mr. Smith said the full staff assessment with rezoning standards is in the packet online. The use is suitable and compatible with surrounding development. The traffic and adjacent property impacts are expected to be minimal. Public facilities and utilities have capacity to serve the development. The proposal is consistent with the intent of the comprehensive plan and RMH zoning district. There were three standards not met; the property could be used as currently zoned, no new or changing conditions currently justify the rezoning request and the proposal does not demonstrate a strong public benefit. Water and sewer services are available. City Landscape Architect has not been able to review the new proposal but with 220 units he did express some concerns to be addressed. The Planning Commission recommended denial by 5-0 vote.

Applicant:

Mr. Steven Jones, on behalf of Parkland Homebuilders addressed Council. Mr. Jones said they have made changes to the plan since the last time Council saw it. The property is two parcels that are currently zoned RML and CCS. They have also added a substantial LINC connection through the property. He showed renderings of the town homes. He also showed a video of an existing Parkland community that would look similar.

Mr. Jones said they did a market analysis of rental rates, and they are in line with most surrounding communities. They also think there is an opportunity for a future LINC trailhead with parking to the north of this property. Other amenities will include a dog park, green space with playground and tree safe area, pool and pool cabana and public art installation at the terminus of the LINC trail.

Mr. Jones said Parkland has done their due diligence to ensure that this plan is feasible. They are confident they can meet the tree and landscape ordinance. Mr. Jones addressed traffic and showed that this concept would generate less traffic than apartments over commercial, which could be done under the current zoning.

Councilwoman Morrison asked if the green spaces to the right and left of the property are planned for future development, future phases? Mr. Jones said there is a staff condition in place if approved and that ensures consistency with this plan, so what is shown is what will be built.

Mr. Jim Jacobi, with Parkland Communities, added that mountain biking trails in those natural areas would be great and they are willing to work with the city to facilitate that.

No one spoke against. Mayor Shepherd closed the public hearing.

Motion by Councilwoman Jenkins, seconded by Councilman Koritko to accept the report from the Planning Commission.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

City Manager stated that the ordinance amendment that was prepared does not have the correct Exhibit B, with the latest changes that were made to the concept plan. The motion needs to reflect that the latest plan will be Exhibit B.

Motion by Councilman Guillaume, seconded by Councilwoman Jenkins to approve the request for rezoning with the latest site plan as Exhibit B. Opposed: Thomasson, Morrison.

MOTION CARRIED. (5-2)

VISITORS, PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS & COMPLAINTS

L. Request from Tony Caro with Red Letter Merchant to close W. Washington St. between Jackson St. and Brown St. for several different upcoming events

Mr. Phillips said it is great that so many people, businesses, and organizations want to have events downtown, but it is getting a bit difficult to manage. This request, the first part is to piggyback on Market Day and there is already another market that is happening on Madison Street during that event. The other part of the request is to piggyback on Porchfest. Council was given maps to illustrate the extent of closures for each of the requests.

Chief Blankenship said that W. Washington St. is a throughfare and goes all the way to Belt Rd. He has had phone calls about closing this street. Having multiple events on the same day does make traffic difficult for the citizens.

Councilwoman Jenkins said she is not opposed to Mr. Caro having an event, but they should not all be at the same time. Councilman Guillaume agreed and said Council needs to look at how they approach these requests and set policy. Councilman Thomasson commented that they should look at these events. It is one thing when it's for charity and brings the community together but it's another when it's just selling things for profit.

Motion by Councilman Guillaume, seconded by Councilwoman Jenkins to deny the request.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilwoman Jenkins, seconded by Councilwoman Morrison to adjourn the Council meeting at 7:49PM.

MOTION CARRIED. (7-0)

Megan Shea, City Clerk

James Shepherd, Mayor