



Cleveland City Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 18, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Oak Springs Community Center/Police Department – 342 Campbell Street, Cleveland, GA

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Turner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Mayor Josh Turner, Council Members Nan Bowen (Mayor Pro Tem), Annie Sutton, Jeremy McClure, and C.J. McDonald

Also, present were City Manager Kevin Harris, City Attorney Keith Whitaker, and City Clerk Lisa Ritchie

INVOCATION

1. Associate Pastor John Luna, Cleveland Worship Center, and White County Ministerial Alliance

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Council Member McClure, seconded by Council Member Sutton, and voted, unanimously, to approve the agenda.

PRESENTATIONS

2. Georgia Cities Week Jack P. Nix Elementary School coloring contest winners

Mayor Turner expressed his appreciation to Katie DeFoor, art teacher at Jack P. Nix, for her dedication and the exceptional work she has done with students in creating such beautiful entries.

Mayor Turner awarded the following students as follows:

4th Place Winner - Autumn Rewis (Kindergarten)

3rd Place Winner - Avaleigh Stinson (4th Grade)

2nd Place Winner - McKenna McDonald (3rd Grade)

1st Place Winner - Evelyn Trump (Kindergarten)

3. Cleveland White 250 Art Contest and Run for Freedom 5K T-Shirt Art Contest

Mayor Turner stated that July 4, 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

He then presented the Cleveland/White 250 awards, recognizing Ezra Dockery as the Cleveland/White 250 Art Contest Winner.

Faith Bunch was named the winner of the Cleveland/White 250 Run for Freedom 5K T-shirt design; however, she was unable to attend the meeting, and Mayor Turner indicated her award would be presented at a later date.

At the conclusion of the presentations, Mayor Turner invited the children in attendance to come forward and bang the gavel as they exited.

4. New White County Library Naming & Sponsorship Opportunities - Informational Presentation for future consideration

Nadine Wardenga addressed the Mayor and Council Members. She presented White County Library naming and sponsorship opportunities. She stated that ground breaking is planned for October or November.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

5. Economic Development and Planning Director Tom O'Bryant – April 2026 Report

Mr. O'Bryant addressed the Mayor and Council Members. He reported the following April items:

- Occupational License - 1
- Building Permits - 4
- Building Inspections - 21
- Sign Permits - 1
- Plan Review - 2
- Current Commercial Activity - 8
- Development Inquiry - 2

Grant Applications and Administration:

- Appalachian Regional Commission well project: Rindt is preparing the preliminary engineering report and survey work is beginning.
- The Wastewater Treatment Plant held the ground breaking ceremony. The notice to proceed date and preconstruction meeting was held on May 11.
- Georgia Rural Workforce Initiative for funding for Campbell Street sewer relief line for servicing Talon Village: DCA held a site visit scheduled for implementation procedures. A contract was developed with the city engineer to implement the project.

Infrastructure and Planning:

- Established the US Census Bureau report on construction status of the WWTP expansion, including expenditures.
- The Cleveland DDA met on April 16th. They completed the development of a survey for downtown Cleveland, organized to develop and implement a parking study, and discuss mandatory DDA training scheduled in August.

6. Finance Director John Solmon – March 2026 Report

Mr. Solmon addressed the Mayor and Council Members. He reported the following March items:

- General Fund: Revenues are down, expenses are up
- LOST and SPLOST Collections: down 9% for the month and 3% for the year

- Public Safety (Police and Fire) is 56% of the general fund expenditure

- Water and Sewer Fund Revenue is up and expenses are down

7. Fire Chief Jason Bryant – April 2026 Report

Fire Chief Bryant addressed the Mayor and Council Members. He reported the following April items:

- Total of 122 incidents (64 inside the city limits, 49 automatic aid, and 9 other)

- Total of 531 incidents in 2026 compared to 527 in 2025, an increase of .76%

- Fire Department personnel completed 420 hours of documented training hours.

- An Aerial Operator Certification course, produced five new Nationally Certified Aerial Operators

- The Fire Station Open House was attended by 75 people. He expressed appreciation to Ms. Ritchie for her assistance with it.

- Automatic Aid has increased 48%

8. Police Chief Jeff Shoemaker – April 2026 Report

Chief Shoemaker addressed the Mayor and Council Members. He reported the following April items:

Total occurrences – 1,871

- Public assist - 315

- Premise checks – 1,208

- Field interviews – 12

- Incident reports – 52

- Accident reports – 16

- Investigative/Supplemental – 18

- Use of force – 0

- Citations – 88

- Warnings – 135

- Warrants – 6

- Juveniles – 1

- Admin: Alcohol Badges, CHRI, Peddler – 20

- Arrests - 3

- Car Seat Installs - 2

9. Public Works Director Ricky Hunt – April 2026 Report

Mr. Hunt was not in attendance. Mr. Harris reported the following April items:

- Dumpster repair/replace – 1

- Culvert Clean Out - 2

- Payment Agreement - 1

- Service on Vehicles - 1

- Residential Just unlock - Do Not Turn On - 1

- Meter Change Out - 11

- City Hall Office Maintenance - 2
- Cut off and lock meter (nonpayment) – 27
- City Park Repairs/Maintenance - 1
- Check for Leak – 4
- Final reading do not lock – 19
- Garbage request – 13
- Sewer backup – 1
- Meeting with customer – 6
- Final read and lock meter – disconnect – 15
- Garbage Request Change - 1
- Meter inspection – 33
- Residential turn on – 32
- Commercial turn on – 5
- Street R-O-W Maintenance - 3
- Meter readings (monthly) – 2,300
- Meter re-reads (monthly) – 50
- Utility locates – 102
- Outside New Water Cut-In & Sewer Cut-In - 1
- After hours work – 4

TOTAL SERVICE ORDERS: 2,636

- Inmates worked 10 of their scheduled (17) workdays
- Routine sewer lift stations daily inspections – 9 lift stations, 7 days a week
- Sanitation (Residential & Commercial) – 58 loads collected, 189.05 tons of waste transported to the transfer station
- White County's proposed budget shows a proposed increase in tonnage.
- Cleveland/White 250 Banners are being installed around the square and Freedom Park.
- Working on playground improvements

10. Water Resources Laboratory Technician Bradley Filaski – April 2026 Report

Mr. Filaski addressed the Mayor and Council Members. He reported the following April items:

Water Treatment

- City wells produced 16.3 MG
- Purchased 6.3 MG from the County
- Flushed 3 hydrants for water quality
- Performed 195 laboratory tests on drinking water
- Collected and shipped all required monthly samples to EPD's lab
- Submitted all monthly operating reports to EPD

- Issued 1 boil water advisory to EPD, testing came back negative

- Water loss for the month was 25.2%

WATER RECLAMATION:

- Discharged 10.3 MG of treated effluent into the Tesnatee Creek

- Performed 108 laboratory tests on influent and effluent wastewater

- Cleaned and changed UV lamps

- Submitted the discharge monitoring report to EPD

- Filled potholes with gravel on the road around the pond

- Greased blowers

- Cleaned aerators at the influent

INDUSTRIAL PRETREATMENT:

- Reviewed Cobb-Vantress and NOK self-monitoring reports

NEW BUSINESS

11. Private Sector Appointee on the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC)

Mr. Harris stated that the appointment represents private businesses and is a joint appointment made in coordination with White County.

Motion by Council Member McDonald, seconded by Council Member McClure and voted, unanimously, to approve the reappointment of Lauren Williams as the private sector representative on the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission for a term beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027.

12. Election of Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) District 2 Officers for the 2026-2027 year

Mayor Turner stated Georgia Municipal Association Nominating Committee's District 2 Officer nominations for 2026-2027 as follows:

-President - Mark Reed, Commissioner, Cornelia

- First Vice President - Courtney Umbehant, Mayor, Lavonia

- Second Vice President - Josh Turner, Mayor, Cleveland

- Third Vice President - Shawn Allen, Councilmember, Demorest

Motion by Council Member Bowen, seconded by Council Member Sutton, and voted, unanimously, to approve Georgia Municipal Association Nominating Committee's District 2 Officer nominations for 2026-2027 as stated.

13. Approval of the Engagement Letter with Walker Pierce & Tuck for Auditor Services for FY2026/2027

Mr. Solmon addressed the Mayor and Council Members. He recommended approving the engagement letter.

Motion by Council Member Sutton, seconded by Council Member McClure and voted, unanimously, to approve the Engagement Letter with Walker Pierce & Tuck for Auditor Services for FY2026/2027.

14. On-Call water, sewer, and stormwater emergency and repair services

Mr. Harris reported that a Request for Proposals (RFP) process had been initiated. A Selection Committee reviewed the submissions and unanimously recommended Kytle Backhoe and Construction, LLC, with Townley Construction identified as the backup contractor.

Council Member McDonald noted that he has worked with both vendors and stated that they do excellent work and are strong selections.

Motion by Council Member McDonald, seconded by Council Member McClure and voted, unanimously, to approve the On-Call water, sewer, and stormwater emergency and repair services to Kytile Backhoe and Construction, LLC, with Townley Construction to serve as the backup.

Mayor Turner expressed appreciation to Mr. Harris. He said this is an important resource for Cleveland.

15. Road disposition request for 235 Church Street from Don and Donna Stockwell

Don Stockwell addressed the Mayor and Council, requesting consideration of the disposition of 235 Church Street. He stated that he is interested in acquiring the easement, noting that the street runs through his property.

Mr. Whitaker explained that there is a statutory process for the abandonment of a municipal roadway, which includes requirements for disposal, public notification, signage, and related procedures.

Without objection from the Council, Mayor Turner directed Mr. Harris and Mr. Whitaker to provide the Stockwells with a written explanation of the process. He stated that the Stockwells may then bring their request back before the Mayor and Council for further consideration.

16. Turner Creek Water Treatment Plant Budget

Mayor Turner presented the Turner Creek Water Treatment Plant budget. He stated that the agreement between the White County Water Authority and the City of Cleveland requires that the Turner Creek Water Treatment Plant operate on a break even budget with any deficiencies at the end of the year, the cost is split based on the Wheelage Agreement between the Water Authority and the City. He said the budget can not be approved by the Water Authority until it is approved by the City. Council Member McClure asked the Mayor if he had any issues with the budget. He said he did not.

Motion by Council Member McClure, seconded by Council Member Bowen and voted, unanimously, to approve the TCWTP budget as presented.

17. Consideration of a motion authorizing the establishment of a separate bank checking account for the collection and administration of Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) proceeds

Mr. Harris discussed the item. He said a separate checking account is needed for administration of revenues and to ensure property segregation of the funds.

Mayor Turner reiterated that voters of White County significantly approved FLOST.

Motion by Council Member McClure, seconded by Council Member Bowen and voted, unanimously, to approve authorizing the establishment of a separate bank checking account for the collection and administration of Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) proceeds.

CALLED MEETING/MEETING MINUTES

18. May 4, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Council Member Bowen, seconded by Council Member McDonald and voted, unanimously, to approve the May 4, 2026 Meeting Minutes with corrections to two scrivener errors.

EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES

19. May 4, 2026 Executive Session Minutes

Motion by Council Member McDonald, seconded by Council Member Sutton and voted, unanimously, to approve the May 4, 2026 Executive Session Minutes.

CITY ATTORNEY KEITH WHITAKER

Mr. Whitaker had no items to report.

CITY MANAGER KEVIN HARRIS

Mr. Harris discussed the upcoming budget hearings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Ritchie gave the announcements.

20. City offices will be closed on Monday, May 25, 2026, in observance of Memorial Day
 21. The Mayor, Council Members, and staff will attend a retreat on Wednesday, May 27, Thursday, May 28, and Friday, May 29, in Buford, Georgia
 22. The Planning and Zoning Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 28, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Oak Springs Community Center/Police Department
 23. The next Cleveland City Council Meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 1, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., at the Oak Springs Community Center/Police Department
- Mayor Turner reminded everyone that tomorrow is election day and the polls are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Council Member Bowen, seconded by Council Member McDonald and voted, to enter an Executive Session at 7:42 p.m.

24. Real Estate

Motion by Council Member Bowen, seconded by Council Member McClure and voted, unanimously, to adjourn the Executive Session and return to the Meeting at 8:48 p.m.

Council Member McDonald opened the door to allow citizens to return to the regular meeting.

ADJOURN

Motion by Council Member McClure, seconded by Council Member Sutton and voted, unanimously, to adjourn the Meeting of May 18, 2026, at 8:49 p.m.