

Good evening.

I am placing the following statement into the official record because it concerns serious procedural violations that have occurred within the governance of this City and the legal implications that follow from them.

My legal team recently completed a review of documents dated October 22, 2025, which I have had in my possession but had not previously analyzed in full consultation with counsel. That review revealed that Councilmember Tracey Messick initiated an outside investigation into the Mayor's Office BEFORE any vote of the City Council and without any legal authority to do so.

The first document is the "Formal Engagement Letter," dated October 22, 2025, from Hall Booth Smith. In that letter, the law firm states that it has been retained to conduct "*an independent investigation into allegations recently made against Mayor Donya L. Sartor*," and that it will investigate not only alleged financial concerns, but also "others' fiscal activities," conduct interviews of elected officials and City employees, review social media, expand the investigation based on new information, and treat this as an ongoing investigative process.

This engagement letter confirms, unequivocally, that a private law firm was hired to investigate the Mayor BEFORE any vote occurred, and that the scope of that investigation far exceeds the authority granted later that same day.

The second document is the "Signed Ordinance to Appoint an Independent Investigator," also dated October 22, 2025. This ordinance authorizes only a limited administrative review of financial transactions between the City and the Downtown Development Authority for fiscal year 2025, and only for the period January 1 to October 20, 2025. It does not authorize an investigation of the Mayor, an investigation of pre-2025 conduct, personnel matters, political allegations, social media, or any prior disputes.

Here is the procedural problem:

The ordinance was signed AFTER the engagement letter was already accepted.

The law firm was already retained.

The investigation was already underway.

And the scope of the engagement had already been defined, by one councilmember claiming to act on behalf of the entire council, not by the governing body acting lawfully.

This is a **direct violation of the City Charter**, which requires:

- A public meeting,
- A formal motion,
- A vote of the full Council, and
- Compliance with Article VII procedures

before any outside investigation may be appointed. None of that occurred. There was no meeting authorizing Tracy Messick to contact the law firm. There was no public vote approving retention of outside counsel prior to the engagement and no authority for a single council member to bind the city prior to the vote and no authorization for investigation of the mayor prior to the vote. This makes the engagement void and misuse of public funds.

Additionally, this process violates a binding order of the Superior Court of Clayton County. On January 8th, 2024, the court entered a final consent judgment and order which expressly prohibits the city council for taking any action in any form against the mayor based on prior law the prior loss and investigation or his finding. It also states that both the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and Clayton County District Attorney found no criminal wrongdoing of the mayor. Despite that, the engagement letter reveals that the law firm was instructed to revisit matters that predate 2025 and are tied directly to allegations addressed in the lawsuit investigation. This is a blatant violation of a standing court order from the Superior Court of Clayton County.

Regardless of how the investigation is labeled, whether it's ethics, administrative, physical, or otherwise, the implications are severe. Mayor Pro-Tem has acted outside her legal authority, engaged in outside counsel without a vote. Taxpayers' funds have been put at risk through an unauthorized contract. The scope of the investigation exceeds any lawful mandate and contradicts the ordinance passed later that same day.

The initiation of the investigation violates the final consent judgment. Any use of the loss and related materials is expressly prohibited. Any action based on pre2025 allegation is barred. The entire investigation process is legally compromised and procedurally invalid.

Because of these acts were undertaken without a vote, without legal authority, and in violation of a court order, I will be seeking a temporary restraining order to immediately halt all investigatory activity and to protect the city from unlawful expenditures and to enforce compliance with both the charter and the final consent judgment.

I'm also directing the following be preserved for legal review.

- All communications related to the engagement of Hall Booth Smith
- All communications between council members concerning the investigation
- All drafts, notes, invoices, records exchanged with the law firm
- Any materials relating to the Lawson investigation

This matter is not political.

This is a matter of law, governance, and compliance with judicial orders.

The citizens of Jonesboro deserve a government that acts within a lawful authority, that follows the Charter, and that respects the ruling of the Superior Court.

This statement is entered into the record to ensure full transparency and to preserve the factual basis for the legal action that must now follow.