

12/8/25
Mtg.

Good evening Councilmembers and residents of Jonesboro.

Tonight, I want to speak directly to the citizens and taxpayers of this City, because you deserve both clarity and honesty about what has taken place over the last several weeks.

On October 22, the Council passed an Ordinance authorizing an administrative investigation.

That Ordinance is very clear. It authorizes an investigation only into financial transactions occurring from, to, and between the City of Jonesboro and the Downtown Development Authority, and only for fiscal year 2025, beginning January 1 and ending October 20. That is the entire scope of what the Council actually passed.

Despite that limited and defined scope, the engagement letter drafted by Hall Booth Smith attempted to create a much broader, open-ended investigation into matters never authorized by law. For over a week, that discrepancy was raised, questioned, and brought to the Council's attention, yet the Council refused repeatedly, three separate times, to pause the investigation, review the requests, or realign it with the law that they themselves passed.

It reached a point where, in order to protect the taxpayers and ensure compliance with the law, I was forced, in my official capacity as Mayor, to prepare a Temporary Restraining Order. A TRO should never have been necessary. Had the Council simply followed the Ordinance or even paused to reconcile the scope as I requested, this additional legal expense and effort would not have been required.

It was not the Council who halted the unauthorized investigation. It was the investigator himself. In his email today, Hall Booth Smith openly acknowledged that the engagement letter they drafted does not match the Ordinance, and that they cannot legally continue with the broader investigation unless the Ordinance is changed. That admission confirms what has been evident from the start: the City cannot (and should not) pay for an investigation that exceeds what was legally authorized.

And that brings us to a second critical point for taxpayers:

While the Council pushed forward with an investigation outside the law, the Downtown Development Authority had already completed its own Interim Investigative Report. That report covers the same time period, January to the fall of 2025, and the same subject matter the Ordinance identifies: the financial transactions relating to the DDA during 2025. The DDA investigator interviewed witnesses, reviewed documents, and issued a written report. Those findings already exist. The factual questions the Ordinance sought to review have, quite simply, already been answered.

So for the citizens of this City:

the investigation the Council authorized has already been done, by the proper governing body.

There is nothing left for a second, City-funded investigation to accomplish. Finally, I want to address an issue that is important for transparency: my legal fees. I did not initiate this investigation. I did not expand its scope. I did not create the conflict between the Ordinance and the engagement letter. Yet I have been required to retain legal counsel and respond to actions taken outside the law. Georgia law is clear that when an elected official must obtain counsel to defend themselves in the performance of their official duties, and when the actions prompting that defense were not initiated by the official, the City may lawfully cover those expenses. I will be submitting my legal costs to the City consistent with that legal authority, and the public will have full visibility into that process.

Tonight, I am asking this Council, again, to protect the taxpayers of Jonesboro by following the law, honoring the limits of the Ordinance that was actually passed, and refraining from spending additional public funds on matters already investigated and resolved.

I remain committed to transparency, fiscal responsibility, and the lawful use of taxpayer dollars. And I welcome any investigation conducted within the legal scope authorized by the Council. Despite the efforts and spending of more than one hundred thousand dollars of taxpayer dollars to find wrongdoing by me, Mayor Pro Tem Messick and outgoing councilmen Don Dixon, Billy Power, and _____, have been unsuccessful. The reason why is simple: there is none. I am looking forward to a future where the council of Jonesboro can focus on the business of the city and not the undoing of its Mayor. thank you.

Sent from my iPhone