Elected Official Special Initiative Funds Policy

City of Jonesboro, Georgia

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Elected Official Special Initiative Funds Policy is to establish clear, consistent, transparent, and accountable procedures for the budgeting, approval, expenditure, documentation, and reporting of funds appropriated by the City of Jonesboro, Georgia for use by individual members of the Mayor's Office and City Council in support of public purposes and municipal priorities.

2. Policy Statement

Special initiative funds are public funds and shall be used only for lawful municipal purposes that benefit the City of Jonesboro, its residents, businesses, neighborhoods, programs, facilities, or public services. Such funds shall not be treated as personal discretionary funds of any elected official and shall remain subject to all applicable City policies, procurement requirements, ethics standards, Open Records requirements, and state and local law.

3. Authority and Administration

The Mayor and City Council may appropriate initiative funds through the annual budget or by approved budget amendment. The City Manager, or designee, shall administer this policy in coordination with the Finance Department and City Clerk. The City Attorney should review proposed uses when legal authority, ethics, procurement, donation, sponsorship, or public purpose questions arise.

4. Definitions

- **Special Initiative Funds:** Funds appropriated in the City budget for use by individual elected officials, subject to this policy, for eligible municipal initiatives.
- **Public Purpose:** A purpose that primarily benefits the City and its residents, for example; neighborhood cleanup, community health fair, youth leadership program, veterans recognition, senior outreach, public safety education, or park improvements.
- **Sponsoring Elected Official:** The elected official requesting that initiative funds be used for an eligible activity, purchase, program, project, or service.
- **Recipient:** Any vendor, nonprofit organization, governmental entity, school, community group, or other party receiving payment or support through initiative funding.

5. Eligible Uses

Special Initiative funds may be used for activities, programs, projects, services, or purchases that serve a legitimate municipal public purpose and are consistent with City priorities, adopted plans, budget authority, and applicable law.

- Neighborhood improvement projects, beautification efforts, community cleanups, and public space enhancements.
- Community engagement, civic education, public safety awareness, youth development, senior services, cultural programming, and wellness initiatives.
- Support for City-sponsored or City-approved events, programs, and public services.
- Small equipment, materials, supplies, signage, printing, outreach, or logistical expenses for approved municipal initiatives.
- Partnerships with public agencies or nonprofit organizations where the City receives a documented public benefit.
- Other uses approved by the City Manager, Finance Director, and, when necessary, the City Attorney as consistent with this policy and applicable law.

Support of qualified non-profit organizations is allowed under this policy, as long as the following requirements are met:

- written agreement
- measurable public benefit
- stated deliverables
- current documentation of nonprofit status

6. Prohibited Uses

Special Initiative funds shall not be used for any purpose that is personal, political, campaign-related, discriminatory, unlawful, unsupported by documentation, inconsistent with City procurement requirements, or primarily beneficial to a private interest rather than the public.

- Campaign activities, political contributions, candidate support, campaign materials, voter persuasion, or electioneering.
- Personal expenses, gifts, meals, travel, entertainment, memberships, dues, or benefits for an elected official, family member, employee, volunteer, donor, or private individual, unless expressly authorized by City policy and approved in advance for public purposes.
- Payments to businesses, nonprofits, or individuals in which the sponsoring elected official or an immediate family member has a financial interest, unless fully disclosed and approved in accordance with applicable ethics and conflict-of-interest requirements.

- Donations, grants, sponsorships, or contributions that lack a written public purpose, measurable public benefit, or approved agreement when required.
- Alcohol, tobacco, controlled substances, weapons, fines, penalties, legal settlements, or expenses prohibited by law or City policy.
- Direct cash assistance, gift cards, prizes, or awards to individuals, unless specifically authorized by Council-approved program guidelines and reviewed for legal compliance.
- Expenses incurred before approval or outside the adopted budget authority.

7. Funding Allocation and Availability

Special Initiative fund amounts shall be established by the Mayor and City Council through the annual budget or approved budget amendment. Funds shall not be spent or committed unless allocated, available, and approved in accordance with this policy. All spending must comply with the city's adopted procurement policy. Unused funds shall not be carried forward unless expressly authorized by Council action or the adopted budget.

8. Request and Approval Process

1. The sponsoring elected official shall submit a written Special Initiative Funds Request Form before any expense is incurred.
2. The request shall identify the proposed use, estimated cost, vendor or recipient, public purpose, public benefit, account or funding source, implementation timeline, and any related City department involvement.
3. The Finance Department shall confirm within 5 business days budget availability and determine whether procurement, purchasing card, invoice, contract, insurance, tax, or documentation requirements apply.
4. The City Manager, or designee, shall review the request within 5 business days for administrative feasibility, consistency with City operations, and compliance with this policy.
5. The City Attorney shall review any request involving legal uncertainty, potential conflict of interest, nonprofit support, sponsorship, donation, grant, intergovernmental agreement, contract, or other elevated risk, within 10 business days.
6. Requests exceeding $2500.00 requires 3 bids and shall be placed on a Council agenda for approval.
7. No elected official may authorize payment, direct staff to make a purchase, promise City funds, or bind the City to an obligation before required approvals are complete.

9. Procurement, Contracts, and Payments

All purchases and payments using initiative funds shall follow the City's purchasing, procurement, contracting, insurance, vendor registration, and accounts payable procedures. Payments should be made directly by the City to approved vendors or recipients. **Reimbursements shall be prohibited except in extraordinary circumstances approved in advance by the Finance Director and City Manager.**

10. Ethics, Conflicts of Interest, and Transparency

Elected officials shall avoid any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest in the use of initiative funds. A sponsoring elected official shall disclose any personal, financial, familial, fraternal, organizational, employment, board, donor, campaign, or other relationship with a proposed vendor or recipient before review or approval. When appropriate, the official shall recuse themselves from discussion, recommendation, or vote consistent with applicable law and City ethics requirements.

To promote transparency and public trust, each elected official shall complete and sign a Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form for every initiative fund request, regardless of whether a conflict exists. The completed disclosure form shall be maintained by the Finance Department as part of the official record for the expenditure and shall be subject to public inspection in accordance with the Georgia Open Records Act and the City's records retention policies. Any disclosed conflict and any required recusal shall be documented and retained with the corresponding funding request.

11. Documentation Requirements

Each approved expenditure shall be supported by documentation sufficient to demonstrate the public purpose, approval, amount, vendor or recipient, goods or services provided, date of service or purchase, and compliance with City requirements. Required documentation may include request forms, invoices, quotes, receipts, agreements, agendas, attendance records, photographs, program descriptions, deliverables, or outcome summaries.

12. Reporting and Public Records

The Finance Department shall maintain a record of initiative fund appropriations, approved requests, expenditures, remaining balances, vendors or recipients, and stated public purposes. A monthly report should be provided to the Mayor and City Council and made available for public inspection consistent with applicable open records requirements. The report will include: the name of the elected official, purpose, vendor, amount allocated, amount spent, and remaining balance. Records shall be retained in accordance with the City's records retention policies.

13. Compliance, Review, and Remedies

The City Manager and Finance Director are responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy. If a request is denied, modified, suspended, or referred to for legal review a written explanation will be provided, citing the applicable City policy, ordinance, or state or federal law. Improper expenditures may require repayment, corrective action, budget adjustment, public reporting, ethics review, or other remedies authorized by law or City policy.

Any Elected Official who disagrees with a decision made under this policy may submit a written appeal to the City Manager within five (5) business days of receiving the written determination. The appeal shall state the basis for the request and include any supporting documentation.

The City Manager shall review the appeal and issue a written decision within ten (10) business days. If the appeal involves a determination made by the City Manager or presents a potential legal issue, the matter may be referred to the City Attorney for legal review and recommendation. The decision of the City Manager, or the Mayor and Council where required by law or City policy, shall be final.

14. Annual Review

This policy should be reviewed annually as part of the budget process or as otherwise directed by the Mayor and City Council. The review should consider legal updates, audit findings, administrative experience, public transparency, and whether the policy continues to support responsible stewardship of public funds.

15. Effective Date

This policy shall become effective upon adoption by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Jonesboro, Georgia and shall apply to all elected official initiative funds appropriated or expended on or after the effective date.

Appendix A

Special Initiative Funds Request Form

Field	Information Required
Sponsoring Elected Official	Name and contact information
Initiative Title	Brief name of the proposed activity, project, program, or purchase
Public Purpose	Description of the municipal purpose and public benefit
Amount Requested	Estimated or final cost
Vendor or Recipient	Name, address, contact, and vendor status if applicable
Budget Account	Account number or funding source, if known
Procurement Needs	Quotes, contract, invoice, insurance, or purchasing requirements
Conflict Disclosure	Any relationship between the elected official and vendor or recipient
Supporting Documents	Attach invoices, quotes, program details, agreements, or other records
Approvals	Finance review, City Manager review, legal review if required, and Council approval if required
Denials/Appeals	Finance review, City Manager review, legal review if required, and Council approval if required