



November 13, 2023

City Council
City of Stonecrest
3120 Stonecrest Blvd.
Stonecrest, GA 30038

Dear City Council,

On behalf of the Mayor and the City Manager, we offer the proposed fiscal year 2024 Operating and Capital budget recommendation. Throughout the budget process, we had numerous discussions and received feedback from staff, City Council, residents and business leaders. We recommend this FY24 budget based upon the theme of *"Expanding Experiences and Resetting Stonecrest"* as an extension of the FY23 budget theme which was *"Improved Quality of Life and Enhanced Service Delivery."* In fiscal year 2023 we created many studies, plans and designs and from those, fiscal year 2024 will see the freight cluster projects, quick response projects, sidewalks, building and light upgrades, wayfinding, park and monument signs, parks furniture and parking lot paving. As we work to get these infrastructure projects in motion, this will help create *expanded experiences* where people from not only from the city but from around the state and beyond will begin to say as we do, "Meet me in Stonecrest".

In keeping with the City Council's desire to transition city services in-house, city staff has continued to execute that task. In 2022, the city transitioned from outsourcing our services to bringing most of our city operations in-house. To date, the only remaining services being outsourced are Information Technology, Engineering, Aquatic Center Management and Right of Way Maintenance. In addition to the expansion of responsibilities in our Parks & Recreation Department with landscape, maintenance and facilities, a Chief Building Official was hired in the summer of 2023. The city is currently staffed at 90%. This represents the aggressive recruitment efforts and competitive benefits package that are offered to employees of the city by way of policy and the compensation study that was completed and adopted by Council in FY23.

In keeping with the FY24 theme of “*Expanding Experiences and Resetting Stonecrest*”, there will be an expansion of programs and services provided through the in-house operations of our Parks & Recreation Department to include senior, adult and youth programs with transportation services and the in-house management of the aquatic center. Additionally, there will be a realignment of the Community Development Department; an expansion of general accounting functions in the Finance Department; and expanded services in the Economic Development Department.

To compliment the items mentioned above, the FY24 budget will also includes components of *Expanded Experiences and Resetting Stonecrest* throughout other city service departments included but not limited to:

EXPENSES

Mayor-Council

The Mayor & City Council have many initiatives that they would like to accomplish in the FY24 budget year. Additional funding has been allocated for those initiatives to also include funding for continued education & training.

City Manager

The City Manager’s office used the FY23 Operational Budget, Capital Improvements Budget and Comprehensive Plan Initiatives to develop a City Workplan that identifies and tracks the status of priorities, initiatives and projects for FY23. This was adjusted to reflect the projects that will be included in the workplan for FY24.

Communications

The Communications Department will no longer be combined with Information Technology. This reorganization will allow the Communications team to focus on marketing, branding and promoting the City of Stonecrest while also providing production services to the various meetings and town halls. The department has also received funding for the additional staff positions of a content creator, marketing/social media specialist, and a part time audio-video tech.

Finance

The finance department is currently implementing Tyler Technologies for the city’s enterprise resource planning software system. This system will be the foundation of improved efficiency for city staff to produce expected reports, assist with forecasting, and make data driven decisions while being fiscally responsible. The finance department has continued to look at revenue recovery and streamlining processes and workflows to ensure efficiency for our stakeholders and business owners as well as safeguarding the city’s expected revenue.

Information Technology

Information Technology services have previously been outsourced. This year, funding has been allocated to do a hybrid of outsourcing and in-house operations. The allocation includes funding for an IT Manager and the creation of a Systems Analyst and Helpdesk Analyst position.

Human Resources

The Human Resource Department added supplemental insurance options to enhance the benefit package that the city offers thus creating a 3% increase to the medical insurance for FY24. Over the last year, HR has been successful in providing new staff appreciation experiences and is working on providing a training suite for next year. Additionally, HR successfully implemented the compensation study recommendations without any additional requests for funding. Funds have been allocated in the FY24 budget for one additional staff position-Human Resources Generalist.

Engineering

The expenses for contract services in Engineering, SPLOST/Capital Management and Augmentation of Right of Way Maintenance are recorded in this department. The city will continue to outsource the augmentation of Right of Way Maintenance however in the FY24 the city will begin transitioning the Engineering department to in-house operations by allocating funds for three (3) positions – City Engineer, Project Manager, and Site Inspector.

Economic Development

In FY23, the city funded the creation of an Economic Development Masterplan. In early FY24, this plan will be presented to the Mayor & City Council with feedback from the ED Masterplan consultant and the economic development plan steering committee. This plan will serve as the road map that will guide strategy for intentional and culturally sustainable economic growth for the city. Once approved by Mayor & City Council, this plan will also set economic development goals that will help recruit and retain businesses. The Economic Development director will then prepare a work plan that will be presented to the Mayor & City Council to outline the execution of the strategy. Funds have been allocated in the FY24 budget for one additional staff position-Business Development Manager, to assist with retaining and recruitment of businesses.

Municipal Court

Our award-winning Municipal Court is led by the Court Administrator and Municipal Court Clerk. Funds have been allocated for additional professional services, solicitor services and an increase in training for Court staff. The court continues to train, educate and provide resources to citizens who utilize the court system.

Parks

In addition to the items mentioned earlier in this letter for the Parks & Recreation Department, FY24 funds have been allocated for two (2) full-time positions – an additional Assistant Director and a Recreation Manager position and two (2) additional part-time Park Ambassadors. There is also an increase in funding for part time positions for the afterschool, summer and spring break programs.

Planning & Zoning

In the FY24 budget, funds have been allocated for two (2) additional staff positions- Senior Planner Community Development Divisional Director. The need for an arborist was evaluated and it was determined that there would be funding included in professional services on an as needed basis. Additionally, the currently existing positions of Land Development Manager and Land Development Coordinator have been moved to the P&Z department (no fiscal impact) from the Building Development Department. This realignment and additional staff positions is intended to enhance coordination among the Development Services Division and create a better experience for contractors, developers and homeowners. The Comprehensive Plan update will begin in FY24 relying heavily on engagement between the consultant, city staff, City Council and our constituents. Aside from the professional services expenses (i.e., the consultant), the fiscal impact for the updated Comp Plan tasks will have a minimal fiscal impact.

Code Enforcement

In FY23, two (2) Code Enforcement Officer positions were added to bring the total officer count to seven (7) and one (1) Director. These additional positions we funded in efforts to take a proactive approach to code enforcement and compliance specifically during the evenings, weekends, and overnight hours while also assisting with business license renewals to ensure all businesses in the city are compliant with city code. The department is working to develop data driven metrics to assist with proactive code enforcement now that the department is fully staffed. The city manager will evaluate the progress and present any recommendations to the Mayor & City Council in mid FY24.

Public Safety Liaison

In the FY24 budget, funds have been allocated for a staff position of Public Safety Liaison. This position will help to identify the proper transition of Police Services to the city while in the interim serving as the official city liaison for all Public Safety related matters through our enhanced IGA with DeKalb County. This will aide in improved service delivery under our IGA and provide more efficient and coordinated efforts with all lines of Public Safety on the county, state and federal levels.

Building

In FY23 through the city's recruitment efforts, we were able to hire an in-house Chief Building Official. For succession planning, there will be recruitment for a second Building Inspector in FY24 Quarter 3. The department is reviewing code and policies/procedures to ensure that the City is business friendly without compromising the safety of all our staff, residents, stakeholders and visitors.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The FY24 projects for SPLOST/Capital Improvements are outlined in the supplemental documents accompanying this letter. The projects proposed for this budget year include transportation improvements, freight cluster projects, intersection improvements, parks improvements and construction, field upgrades, parking lots additions/expansions, sidewalks, road repaving in addition to gateway monuments, bridge & streetscaping and wayfinding signage.

REVENUE

The revenue projections for FY24 total \$16.1 million which includes a mileage rate of 1.257. Additionally, we expect an increase in anticipated revenue due to the reassessment of property values in DeKalb County.

The City's major funding sources are general property taxes, franchise fees, and business taxes, namely the insurance premium tax and business occupational taxes. In less than three years, the city has gone from a \$13.4M to \$16.1M budget which is being presented to you today.

The Finance Department will look for additional grant funding and other revenue sources including bonds to assist with the Capital Improvement Plan projects.

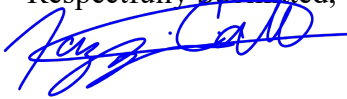
Conclusion

The budget presented is focused on "*Expanding Experiences and Resetting Stonecrest*" as we continue to move Stonecrest Forward. While remaining fiscally responsible, we will continue to review governmental operations, service delivery and internal processes and procedures to ensure that we are continuing to strive to be a "World Class City!"

The FY24 budget requests are mindful of the feedback and comments provided by the residents as well as the Financial Oversight, Parks, SPLOST, and Transportation committees while also balancing the anticipated revenues and expected expenses.

We wish to thank all the department directors for their dedicated time and work in developing the 2024 budget requests.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jazzmin R. Cobble", written over the printed name.

Jazzmin R. Cobble, Mayor

c/o Gia R. Scruggs, City Manager