



**City of Lilburn
City Council Special Called Work Session Minutes**

March 13, 2026

Draft

**Madison Public Safety Building, 160 N. Main St., Madison,
GA 30650**

Council Members:

Johnny Crist, Mayor
Christina van Maanen, Post 1
Scott Batterton, Post 2
Mike Hart, Post 3
Emil Powella, Post 4

I. Executive Session (if necessary)

II. Call to Order

Mayor Crist called the meeting to order at 10:11 AM.

III. Roll Call

Mayor Johnny Crist, Council member van Maanen, Council member Batterton, Council member Hart, Council member Powella, GMA Representative Michael McPherson, Jenny Simpkins, Roy Whitehead, Rebecca Baumann, Anja Peay, Reid Turner, Therese Brown, Sherrie Smith, Chief Dusik, Mark DeArmon, Benjie Fennel, Chuck Button.

IV. GMA Representation

During a portion of the Special Called Work Session, Michael McPhearson delivered a presentation to the Mayor, Council, and Jenny, while all other attendees were asked to step out.

V. Financial Overview

Therese Brown presented Lilburn's financial position, noting a strong general fund balance equal to 10 months of operations; however, \$2.5 million is tied up in non-liquid advances, limiting flexibility. Georgia Fund One holds \$5.7 million, providing several months of coverage for operating expenses in an emergency, but the city's truly undesignated fund balance is only \$397,000. Upcoming bond obligations, including a \$585,000 payment due by 2028, require careful liquidity planning. Discussion also focused on potential impacts of new state legislation regarding property tax restricting future millage rate increases that could cap at 3%, and significantly reducing projected revenues. This may create substantial budget shortfalls and require the city to explore alternative revenue sources and strategic financial adjustments.

VI. Land Use efficiency

Reid Turner presented land use efficiency in Lilburn, noting that the city ranks in the lower half of Gwinnett County in terms of productivity per acre and has a current land-productivity ratio of approximately 1.03. A significant portion of land remains single-family residential, while 19% is tax-exempt, limiting revenue potential. Low-density mixed use and higher-density residential developments were identified as key strategies to improve efficiency, as they generate substantially more tax revenue per acre compared to low-density residential or parking-heavy strip malls and big box commercial.

The discussion emphasized reducing surface parking, encouraging redevelopment of underutilized commercial areas, and promoting “missing middle” housing such as townhomes and duplexes. Mixed-use development, particularly in the downtown core, was favored to support economic activity and increase tax value. A mobility-focused growth scenario could significantly increase the city’s tax base, highlighting the importance of strategic density planning while maintaining the character of downtown Lilburn.

VII. Comprehensive Planning Update

The council reviewed progress on the comprehensive planning effort, including the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) update. The planning process, which began with stakeholder engagement in 2022, has incorporated community feedback to refine a single preferred land-use scenario, with the mobility-focused approach receiving the strongest support. The plan prioritizes targeted improvements such as the Lilburn Industrial corridor and multimodal transportation enhancements. The UDO update is currently underway, with code revisions in progress and adoption anticipated by October. An upcoming open-house event will provide an opportunity for public review and feedback before finalizing the land-use plan. The discussion also highlighted the importance of clear, simplified communication to improve public understanding and encourage engagement in the planning process.

VIII. Downtown Master Concept

Attendees discussed the Downtown Master Concept, emphasizing the importance of adopting a unified, big-picture vision to guide future development and economic growth. The concept focuses on creating a vibrant, walkable downtown through improved mobility, redesigned streets, expanded greenspace, and enhanced civic areas. Key concepts include establishing “A streets” fronted by buildings or parks and “B streets” for service and parking, as well as reimagining corridors like Lawrenceville Highway to prioritize pedestrian safety and aesthetics.

Leaders stressed that the Master Concept is intended as a flexible guiding framework rather than a final design, allowing for adaptation over time. Alignment among the Mayor and Council was highlighted as critical to successfully implementing the vision and positioning downtown as a destination for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Additional discussion highlighted the importance of mixed-use development, continuous commercial frontage, and “natural surveillance” strategies such as orienting buildings toward public spaces to improve safety. The concept also encourages redevelopment of underutilized parcels, replacement of surface parking with active uses, and creation of neighborhood nodes to support walkability and reduce car dependence. Council alignment on this flexible, concept-level framework was identified as essential for guiding future decisions and downtown investment.

IX. City Planning and Budget

Discussed were upcoming budget decisions, staffing considerations, and community initiatives. A decision on staff additions is anticipated ahead of the July budget, alongside planning for new community events, including a block party, Fiesta in the Park, and Glow with the Flow. Efforts to increase public engagement through events, website improvements, and social media have significantly expanded community reach and participation.

Operational discussions focused on the potential to bring landscape services in-house, which could generate substantial long-term cost savings, supported by new equipment and improved logistics. The city is also preparing to launch an online permitting system to streamline services. Additional topics included annexation efforts, exploration of alternative revenue sources such as bond structures which can generate payments in lieu of taxes for the city, and the potential formation of a Police Foundation.

Overall, the meeting emphasized balancing budget priorities, operational efficiency, and community engagement to support the city’s growth and service delivery.

X. Police Department Performance

Chief Dusik presented Police Department performance metrics, noting strong operational outcomes and proactive policing efforts. Officers conducted proactive area checks, contributing to a 55% reduction in property crime. The department maintained an average emergency response time of 4.62 minutes, preserving effective coverage across service zones. Traffic safety efforts resulted in a 13.32% reduction in accidents in 2025, with just over 1,000 reported incidents. The department also exceeded national averages in crime clearance rates, including 100% for murder, 94% for aggravated assault, and 32% for motor vehicle theft. Continued investment in the traffic unit was identified as a need to allow dedicated focus on traffic enforcement and sustain safety improvements.

XI. Strategic Work Plan and Public Works update

The council reviewed the city's strategic work plan from the previous year, highlighting which goals were successfully achieved. Public Works operations were discussed, including possible future plans to move equipment closer to usage sites to reduce travel and setup time. Chipper service was noted as overly time-consuming for staff and could be redirected to another area to improve efficiency and possibly offered as a paid service. Additionally, new GPS-linked emergency markers are being installed in city parks to enhance safety and emergency response capabilities.

For more detailed information regarding the topics discussed please refer to the presentation slide show linked in the Special Called Work Session Meeting Agenda.

XII. Adjournment

Mayor Crist adjourned the meeting at 4:54 PM.

Approved this __ day of ____, 2026.

Johnny Crist, Mayor

Anja Peay, City Clerk

