CITY OF CORNELIA
MINUTES OF MEETING
JULY 7, 2026

The Cornelia City Commission met in a Workshop Session on Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 5:00 PM in the Commission Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor John Borrow was absent. Mayor Pro Tem, Janice Griggs called the meeting to order, and the following Commissioners were present: Mark Reed, Don Bagwell, Tony Cook. Also present: City Attorney Steve Campbell, City Manager Donald Anderson, and City Clerk Debbie Turner.

Also Present were Sonja Crawford, Evelyn McClaine, Blaine Wasden, and his wife.

Mayor Pro Tem, Griggs stated that she would do her best to fill in for Mayor Borrow. She went over the items on the agenda and asked City Manager Anderson if we knew of anyone coming to speak at the Public Forum. Mr. Anderson said that Audrey Davenport would be there to give an update on the Mural Dedication at Jim Smith Park. They discussed the amendment to the zoning ordinance that was tabled last month. They then went over the request for the conditional use for Mini Storage units. Ms. Crawford asked if the request was for all 3 lots, Mr. Anderson said that it was just the one upfront and that the other 2 were approved last year. Commissioner Reed said he is not opposed to storage units it is just where they are located at. Commissioner Reed said although the developer has done everything that we have asked him to, he still thinks there could be a better use of the space. He said he is not going to create any new jobs or pay any utility bills. He said you could put a restaurant, convenience store, hotel or even an Aldi there. Mayor Pro Tem Griggs said you have to look at the impact of what retail would create there, she said there would be more traffic. Mayor Pro Tem Griggs said she had spoken with the developer, and he said that retail would not work because of the retention pond. Commissioner Bagwell said that he would hope that he would protect the cemetery. She said that he is. They discussed the remaining items on the agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

Janice Griggs, Mayor Pro Tem

CITY OF CORNELIA
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JULY 7, 2026

The Cornelia City Commission met in Regular Session on Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 6:00 PM in the Commission Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor John Borrow called the meeting to order, and the following Commissioners were present: Mark Reed, Don Bagwell, Tony Cook, and Janice Griggs. Also present: City Attorney Steve Campbell, City Manager Donald Anderson, and City Clerk Debbie Turner.

Commissioner Bagwell gave the invocation, and Commissioner Cook led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Reed made the motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

Commissioner Bagwell made a motion to approve the June 2nd minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 – 0

The city manager gave his monthly report for June. He stated that the Big Red Apple Centennial Celebration was very well attended despite the heat. The DDA learned some things that could have been done differently such as cutting the hours of the event and having the food vendors open earlier. The fireworks were phenomenal; we have received a lot of positive feedback on the event. I want to thank Noah, the DDA, and Peter Madruga for putting this together in such a short period of time.

The contractor has begun working on the construction of the Amphitheater. I know it does not look like a lot has been done yet. This is because they have been waiting for approvals of all their submittals to the engineer and architect. The soil testing should be finished this week, once we receive the results, they should be clear to begin digging footings.

We received notice that the state is once again giving homeowners with Homestead Exemption a one-time credit of $18,000. This will not affect our revenue because the state will reimburse us like they did in 2024.

We have received the audit for Fiscal Year 2025, and I am happy to report that it was once again another good audit. Our fund balances increased once again, which is great. We did have one finding but it was very minor, it had to do with our software conversion, and we knew about it ahead of time. The auditors will attend the August Workshop to present their findings and answer any questions.

City Manager Anderson said that he would like to take the time to commend Audrey Davenport on the work she has done on the Jim Smith Park Mural, he said that he has seen it and that she has done a phenomenal job representing Ward 4 as a Historical Black Neighborhood. He said he thinks everyone will be proud of what she has done.

A copy of this report is made an integral part of the minutes.

Public Forum

Audrey Davenport came forward to give an update on the dedication of the Jim Smith Mural Art project and Hill Fest. She noted the keynote speakers that will be there and that it will start at 4 PM this Saturday. She introduced the new Pastor of Shady Grove Baptist Church Sherrod Aiken. Ms. Davenport also asked about a request that she made about updating the Plague for Jim Smith Park. City Manager Anderson said that the Mayor and Commissioners asked him to get some prices, and he is working on that. Ms. Davenport said she wanted to remind them that the Red Clay Cohort grant was only 1 of 5 in the state that was awarded. Mayor Pro Tem Griggs and the Commissioners thanked her.

Sonja Crawford came forward to represent a group from her neighborhood. Ms. Crawford said that Commissioner Reed had come and met with them, and showed them the Codes on Personal Property Maintenance. She said that they would like to make a suggestion that the codes for the Property Maintenance be put on the back of water bills. She said that they would also like to see that they be given out to anyone who is making an application for water, and also realtor's that are selling property in the city. Mayor Pro Tem Griggs thanked her.

Old Business

Ordinance # 06-26-01, Amendment to Table 6.2 of the Zoning Ordinance

The Traditional Neighborhood District zoning designation is ideal for infill development because it requires lots of green space and pedestrian areas such as sidewalks. However, the current regulations make it something that would not be desirable in our existing residential zoning districts. This ordinance amends Table 6.2 as it pertains to the TND Zoning District to make it more suitable for our needs. The minimum lot size required to re-zone to TND would be changed from 5 acres to 0 because there are little to no existing parcels in our existing residential zones that are 5 acres. The maximum height will be reduced from 45 feet to 35 feet, and the number of stories will be reduced from 4 to 3 to fit within our existing residential districts. The minimum heated floor area will be increased from 550 square feet to 1,080 square feet. The minimum setback abutting R-1, R-1-A, and R-1-B will be reduced from 35 feet to 15 feet. This ordinance was posted for public comment at the June 2nd Commission Meeting. To date we have not received any comments for or against this change.

Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Public Hearings

Request for a Conditional Use Permit for Mini Storage Units at 1509 Level Grove Road

The city manager stated that this is a request by Webster Lake Investment Group, LLC to construct mini storage units on parcel # 1 at 1509 Level Grove Road. The owner was granted a Conditional Use Permit to construct storage units on parcels 2 and 3 last year. Originally, they intended to do a commercial use on parcel # 1 but because of Georgia Power's requirements regarding their easement that goes through the middle of the property this is not feasible. This request was tabled at the June 2nd Commission Meeting to allow the petitioner the opportunity to submit architectural renderings and a landscaping plan. Both of these items have been submitted and are in your packet.

Mayor Pro Tem, Griggs opened the Public Hearing, and James Irvin, Site Civil Engineer for the applicant came forward to answer any questions. Mr. Irvin said that he wanted to give you some information on why the plan had to change from the original idea. He said that on the Master Plan they wanted a retail commercial space but as they got into the detail design the retention pond was going to take up too much space. So the applicant was concerned on how he could market a much smaller space so rather having that area not being used he decided to put two more storage units there. Mr. Irvin provided some pictures of the landscaping plans and the storage units. He said that with the landscaping plans Cornelia's ordinance actually calls for more requirements than most cities they work with across the state. Cornelia requires shrubs, trees, and landscaping strips not just in the front but all around the property. Mr. Irvin said that in front of the development there are trees that they can't touch and he said he thinks it will be a nice development once it is finished. He said that something made have been mentioned about the cemetery at the last meeting and he said that the gravesites are in the GA Power easement, so there would be no disturbances to the gravesites. Commissioner Reed asked where would the detention ponds be at? Mr. Irvin showed him a picture of where the ponds are required. Commissioner Cook said did I understand that the storage unit was a second choice. Mr. Irvin said yes, the original plan was for a commercial retail space. Commissioner Reed asked if the size of units affects the retention pond. Mr. Irvin said no that is the way they oriented. Commissioner Reed asked what is the size of the paved area and the new storage units. Mr. Irvin said the depth is 110 feet, 200 feet wide, and it is about an acre. Audrey Davenport said that it looks like your construction is right beside the grave sites. He said that they are not allowed in the GA Power easement. Ms. Davenport asked if some kind of fence could be put up. Gay Davis shared statistics on how many storage units there are around us and how many are empty. Jonathan Mark came forward and said he is not against storage units and that he thinks there will be a lot less traffic than something else. Mr. Mark said he would rather see storage units there instead of another convenience store. Commissioner Bagwell said that maybe we need a little bit more information with what Ms. Davis had to say. He said that he does think the storage units will have a nice presentation when they are completed. He asked Mr. Irvin if he thinks Webster Lake has done any research on how marketable these units will be based on other storage units. Mr. Irvin said that might be a better question for the applicant, but he said I am sure he has done his research. Commissioner Reed made a motion to deny the request for the conditional use. The motion died for a lack of a second. Commissioner Cook said that we can keep kicking the can down the road, but it's going to be storage units. Commissioner Cook made a motion to un-table it, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 3 – 1 Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the conditional use, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 3 – 1 Commissioner Reed voted No.

Jody Tomas came forward to say that he had fallen down the steps beside the railroad tracks. City Manager Anderson said that the steps belong to Norfolk Southern, but they are working on a solution that would eliminate them. Mr. Tomas said that he just wanted you to know how unsafe they are. Mayor Pro Tem Griggs thanked him for coming.

Mayor Pro Tem Griggs opened the Public Hearing for Ordinance # 06-26-01, Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Regarding the Placement of Accessory Buildings in Residential Districts. This amendment will make it so that accessory structures will not be permitted in the side yard in residential zoning districts. Mayor Pro Tem Griggs closed the Public Hearing. Commissioner Reed made a motion to post the ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

New Business

Amendment to the City's Financial Policies

The city manager recommended several changes to our Financial Policies. We now have a Centralized Purchasing Agent, the first change explains how purchases are to be made. Department Heads will contact the Centralized Purchasing Agent when they need to make any purchases. This position will obtain the prices and input the requisition for the Department Head. Once the Department Head has approved the Purchase Order the Centralized Purchasing Agent will process the order. The second change pertains to Purchase Orders. Specifically, it requires that the Purchase Order must be approved prior to any purchases being processed. This change also requires that packing slips for goods must be submitted to Accounts Payable prior to payment being issued. The final change pertains to the use of city credit cards. We have done away with individual credit cards.

Credit cards are now managed by the Finance Department and must be checked out by the Department Head for purchases. Commissioner Bagwell made a motion to approve the Financial Policy changes, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 - 0

Appointment to the Historic Preservation Commission

The city manager stated that we currently have 1 opening on the Historic Preservation Commission that needs to be filled. I have received an application from Joni Mabe to fill this opening. Commissioner Reed made a motion to appoint Joni Mabe to the HPC, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Engineer’s Recommendation for the FY 2025 CDBG Project

The city manager stated that this is a water, sewer, and storm drainage project in the Circle Drive area that is partially funded by a $1 million CDBG Grant. We received 6 bids for the project ranging from $1,042,970 to $2,213,909. After reviewing the bids, Carter & Sloope recommends that you award this project to Higgins Construction in the amount of $1,042,970. Commissioner Cook made a motion to award the project to Higgins Construction, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Recommendation for Speed Bumps on Lee Street

The city manager stated that the Police Department has been dealing with the issue of cars speeding on Lee Street for about a year. During this time, they have written several citations, but they cannot be there all the time. We installed a temporary speed bump last week near the entrance of the Sierra Vista apartments. Chief Roberts met with some of the residents on June 30th who informed him that speeding near the Lee Street Apartments is still an issue. For this reason, he has suggested that we install 2 permanent speed bumps, one near the entrance of the Sierra Vista Apartments and one near the entrance of the Lee Street Apartments. Commissioner Cook made a motion to install the speed bumps, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 – 0

FLOST Resolution and IGA

This resolution authorizes the mayor to sign an Intergovernmental Agreement with Habersham County and the other Municipalities to hold a referendum to impose a Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST). If approved by the voters, it would add a penny sales tax for 5 years to be used to lower property taxes. Based on the IGA the city will receive 11.52% of the proceeds which based on preliminary estimates and our current Milledge rate we should be able to reduce our rate by almost 50%. I recommend that you approve this resolution authorizing the mayor to sign the IGA. Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the Mayor to sign the IGA, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

Janice Griggs, Mayor Pro Tem