

CITY OF CORNELIA
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
December 2, 2025

The Cornelia City Commission met in a Workshop Session on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 5:00 PM in the Cornelia Municipal Building Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor, John Borrow, called the meeting to order and the following Commissioners were present: Tony Cook, Janice Griggs, Mark Reed, and Don Bagwell. Also, present: City Attorney, Steve Campbell, City Manager, Donald Anderson, Human Resources Director, Lindsay Cannon and City Clerk, Debbie Turner.

Mayor Borrow opened the meeting. Commissioner Reed made a motion to enter into executive session for personnel, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Commissioner Reed made a motion to exit executive session, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0.

Mayor Borrow opened the meeting once again and they discussed the proposed annexation. They talked about the letters that had been sent in through email and hand delivered. Commissioner Bagwell said it looked like most of them were opposed to any data center. Mayor Borrow said the data center is not part of this and we don't even allow them. They went over the items on the agenda. Mayor Borrow asked about the presentation for the Police Department. Anderson said that they are receiving their State Certification. They talked about the zoning and annexation for Cook and they decided that the Development Assistance Real Property Interest Acquisition Ordinance should not be approved. City Manager Anderson went over the preliminary plat for Magnolia Townhomes and said it met all the requirements. Mr. Anderson said that Audrey Davenport will be here tonight to give an update on the Vibrant Communities Grant. He said that we will host the first Townhall meeting this Thursday night. They discussed the commission meetings dates for 2026, and Mr. Anderson said he will be out of town on the 1st Tuesday night in April, so he requested that the meeting be moved to the second Tuesday. They discussed the other items on the agenda. The City Attorney came in and they moved back to the proposed annexation and discussed it at length. Mayor Borrow asked the commissioners what their thoughts on it. Commissioner Reed said he thought the Commercial and Industrial was a really good use and Commissioner Cook said he would like to see it.

Commissioner Reed made a motion to move into executive session for litigation, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell.

Commissioner Reed made a motion to exit executive session, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

No Action Taken!

The meeting adjourned at 5:55

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

John Borrow, Mayor

CITY OF CORNELIA
MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETING
December 2, 2025

The Cornelia City Commission met in Regular Session on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 6:00 PM in the Cornelia Municipal Building Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor, John Borrow, called the meeting to order and the following Commissioners were present: Tony Cook, Janice Griggs, Mark Reed, and Don Bagwell. Also, present: City Attorney, Steve Campbell, City Manager, Donald Anderson, and City Clerk, Debbie Turner.

Mayor Borrow gave the invocation and Commissioner Bagwell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the minutes from November 7th minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

City Managers Monthly Report

We officially kicked off Christmas in Cornelia with the opening of Christmas in the Park on Thanksgiving and the Annual Downtown Tree Lighting on Saturday evening. We had about 100 people attend the Tree Lighting Ceremony. Christmas in Downtown Cornelia will take place Saturday from 4:00 to 9:00 PM. We met with Forsyth County about our Nutrient Trade request. They have some concerns; we are working to set up a meeting with EPD to assure them that they will receive their phosphorus back at the end of the 5 years. I told them that we understand the burden is on us to come up with a permanent solution to our phosphorous problem within the 5-year window of the trade. They want to make sure that EPD will not give their phosphorous to us if we are unable to find a permanent solution. They said if EPD assures them that they will get their phosphorus back they see no reason why the agreement cannot be finalized in early 2026. Norfolk Southern has the Rosa Park rail crossing project scheduled to take place sometime in January. They have 4 crossings between Toccoa and Cornelia that they will be upgrading so they are not able to give us a start date for our project yet. The crossing will be closed for 3 days to complete the project. We met with Waste Eliminator to go discuss any issues that we are having with our garbage service. We told them that the number of complaints has dropped since they began picking up all the garbage, even if the lid is unable to shut. They document these addresses so if the same addresses are consistently putting too much garbage out, we can address it with the customer. They are working on the logistics to see if they can reduce the route from 3 days to 2 days. If they decide to make this change,

they will give us plenty of notice so that we can notify the affected customers of their new pickup day. The restrooms for the new park have been delivered and should be installed this week. Once they are in place Higgins should be able to finish the park quickly if the weather cooperates. This report is made an integral part of the minutes.

I am truly honored to be here tonight to make this presentation on behalf of the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police and the Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Program. This is an honor that is earned. It is not given. The members of the Cornelia Police Department, under the direction of Chief Roberts, has done a great service to you as the citizens of Cornelia by maintaining the certification through the state of Georgia since 2007. The Cornelia Police Department was the first agency in Habersham County to become state certified. Currently, they are the only police department that is certified in Habersham County. The state certification program is a program that has 141 standards and about 275 bullet points in those standards that must be complied with in one fashion or another. It may be through a policy and a procedure. They're in compliance along with approximately 157 agencies that are throughout the state of Georgia that are also state certified, meaning they're meeting the same standards as other agencies within the state. When you become state certified, that's kind of like having an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree. At this time, I'd like to invite Chief Roberts and the rest of the staff here at the Cornelia Police Department to come up. We're going to present them with a plaque from the Georgia Chief's Association. Y'all come on up, gather around, be proud of what you've accomplished. It takes buy-in from the top all the way to the bottom so that everybody's on the same page. Trust me when I say not all agencies get buy-in and it's a huge struggle. I was personally able to come and perform their last assessment, which covered three years prior of being certified. And making sure that all those standards and all those bullet points were properly covered and being able to give that recommendation to the state for recertification. Chief, the state of Georgia law enforcement certification hereby is to be known that the Cornelia Police Department has fully demonstrated its commitment to law enforcement excellence and best practices by meeting all applicable standards as established in the Georgia law enforcement certification program. Therefore, upon recommendation of the Joint Review Committee of the Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Program, this agency is hereby recognized as a certified law enforcement agency for the period of September 25 through August 2028. Thank you. Mayor Borrow thanked him and the Chief and the entire Police Department for their dedication to the city and its citizens.

Public Forum

The mayor announced that we are the public forum portion of our meeting. You're more than welcome to address us. We've had people say that we

only listen to certain voters, we only listen to certain people who live in the city of Cornelius. Of course, that couldn't be further from the truth. We listen to anybody, whether you're a voter or not, whether you're a resident of Cornelius, the county, Alaska. It doesn't matter to us. We value your feedback. We humbly ask that if you've got something to say, you keep it to three minutes. If you've got something exactly the same that somebody else just said, well, of course you're welcome to say it, but in the interest of letting everybody else have their turn, consider your point taken. Before we open it up, I just want to address everybody. For those of you that don't know, my name's John Borrows, I've been the mayor here for six years. I want to tell you how we got here. So, first, when I got elected as mayor, and long before, there's been talk across the county and in the city that we don't want sprawl, we don't want a Sam's Club in the city, we don't want a Costco on Pea Ridge. What can we do to maintain our rural charm and character while also addressing the needs that our citizens have been asking for? How often, Mr. Anderson, do you get someone saying, "I want a Publix?" So, this is kind of our way of thinking. How do we address the needs of our citizens while listening to the needs of people from around the county? This has really been a decade-long idea. The county and the city, all cities must comply and complete something called a comprehensive plan. It's done every five years, and we have this in sessions we've got white boards and flip charts on what we need. The county and the cities feel that if we're going to have any development it needs to be along the interstate where they can handle it so that we can maintain the charm and small town feel and that's how we got here. Does that make sense to everybody? Now, I know a lot of you may support it. I know a lot of you may be opposed to it. But that's why we're here, but when I tell you that we've met with hundreds, literally hundreds, maybe even a thousand people over the past five years telling us we need something. We meet with teachers and nurses saying we'd like to live in Cornelius, but we can't afford to. We work in Hainesham County, but we don't have a place to live. We have to commute from Stevens County or Banks. We understand that there's a national housing crisis and one way that cities can address this is by allowing higher density. So that's how we've gotten to where we are. Now I know there's a lot of information or maybe even some misinformation so I'm going to address a few of the things right now. Number one, a data center isn't even an allowed use in Cornelius. It's not part of our zoning ordinance. The property developer put up a wish list and said, maybe a data center, maybe this, maybe that. That doesn't mean that it's coming. In fact, it means it's not coming because it's not an allowable use in Cornelius. What we try to do as commissioners is make decisions based on facts and available data and not necessarily on fear or fear tactics or manipulation or anything like that. So, number one, the data center isn't coming. Number two, I hear a lot of people saying we can't handle this level of instant growth. Nobody's talking about instant growth. We're talking about a five-to-ten-year plan. We have been working

with GDOT. We've been talking with the school system. We had a meeting scheduled with the superintendent for today that he couldn't make it to because he got called to Atlanta. I don't read a lot of Facebook. But I have people sending me screenshots that say, "Cornelia's going to do what they want and give the finger to the rest of the county." That's not true. We listen to what everybody says. I've had people calling me out, calling me a snake. "Hey John, are you getting paid under the table for this thing?" "Good Lord, no." "Good Lord, no." My salary as mayor is \$400 a month, commissioners are \$200 a month. Not that it's any of y'all's business but when I got elected mayor, my wife and I decided that we were donating my annual salary to churches and charities in the area to help feed hungry kids to do whatever. We could put my kid's college account. I could go spend it on a steak dinner but the idea was that I would not enrich myself in this act of public service and to hear people are sending screenshots and they're calling you a snake. They're saying, follow the money. Why? These are my friends and neighbors. I go to church with y'all. I would submit to you that Facebook is not a decent public forum to talk about issues like this. Half the town has my phone number, call me I am glad to sit down and have a good faith conversation with any of you about any of this, whether you're for it or against it. I will sit here and listen and so will these commissioners. You've got our email addresses, but if somebody says on Facebook, hey, John, answer me this question, I don't even know you. I'm not going to answer your question. The proper historical way to engage has always been, call me up, find me, call City Hall, get my number, call these people. Nobody's hiding here everything is transparent. Other comments say, well, newspapers need to start coming to meetings. They've been coming to meetings since the dawn of time. We've been broadcasting this stuff on Facebook Live for, at least since COVID, you can go look up just about every single meeting. It's all on there, nobody's hiding anything. So there's a narrative out there that some people are trying to spread saying, oh, they're being shady, or they're snakes, or whatever it is. So, what I'd like to tell you is my commitment to treat everybody here with respect. If I disagree with you, I'm not going to call you a snake, I'm not going to shut you down. I'll look at you, and if I disagree with you, I'll say thank you for your feedback and we appreciate it. Does that make sense? So now that we know there's no data center, this stuff isn't happening at all at once. It's a five-to-10-year plan. Groundbreaking maybe next year or not. Some of the fears are not based on fact. So, knowing that, we open this up for public comment. When you come up, approach the podium. Tell us who you are and where you live. This is part of the public record, but we are all ears. Everyone can come up. The forum's open.

Carly Camejo and I live in Cornelia. People often say that they want responsible growth. That is exactly what the Red Apple corridor delivers in spades. Yet, rampant misinformation has fueled the hysteria that we see online today. Despite online claims, not one home faces eminent

domain, or will be destroyed. There is no data center, and no infrastructure for a data center, or anything close to it. Despite allegations with no proof, there is no secret deal, no mustache rolling villain. Cook communities will pay the full \$80 million for infrastructure and the city will reimburse those costs only through taxes from the new property owners, not from existing residents. The families who move into these houses will already largely live in Habersham County. We're not talking about transplants from Atlanta. At Cornelia Elementary, 52% of students meet the federal definition of homelessness. Even families who cannot afford the new homes will benefit when existing residents move and open units across town. The average Red Apple home will be priced at \$210,000. Critics lean on distant hypotheticals instead of evidence, and the evidence is clear. I want to pause here to address some rumors that some actors have simply gotten wrong. There was no secret, notices were sent, public hearings were held, the school district received certified communication, and notably stayed silent until social media pressure grew. The county filed no objection. The project will take five to ten years to build. No data center has been proposed, no homes will be taken, and no eminent domain applies. Cook communities, not taxpayers, will fund all infrastructures and eventually those that buy the properties. These are verifiable facts, so we must ask, how can we trust those who have been wrong on nearly every point? I agree, I don't want a Dollar General on every street corner either, but with only 17% of students proficient in math and 42% proficient in reading at Habersham Central, we cannot ignore the role that housing plays in learning. Anyone who cares about our schools, the safety of our children, the stability of our families, and the ability of teachers to live where they work should see the urgency of affordable housing. We must meet basic needs and ensure families in Cornelia have real homes, not 12 people to a single rundown apartment, but housing that gives children stability and parents dignity. To the council, there is a vocal group opposed to this development, but they will also be 10 years down the line asking why is housing inflation still out of control? Why is homelessness increased and crimes against children increased as we know happens in living conditions like this, among other issues? I think passing affordable housing through this project is the right direction. Some people you can't please, but the people speaking on Facebook are not the families struggling to pay an astronomical mortgage. Thank you.

Shree Irvin spoke from the crowd and asked who do you work for and do you live here.

Michelle Chitwood also spoke from the crowd, have you lived here all your life?

Mayor Borrow said we ask that you treat each other kindly with respect.

David Zavala said I didn't prepare anything in writing because I wasn't thinking about talking. I was listening to the young lady I agree with

some things but I disagree with some things you're not a real estate agent are you? Alright I'm a real estate agent and I know what happens when you build properties you do keep people out of the county I mean look at some of the Huntington Manor how many people live in Huntington Manor that were Habersham residents prior to Huntington Manor so you do keep people out from other areas. What's going to happen when all these people from all other counties come into Habersham County? What about employment? What is your goal, your agenda to build more employment? These people that are coming outside of Habersham County to live in these places, what are they going to do? They're going to take Habersham County residents' jobs and then you're going to have lack of jobs. Then you're going to have unemployment. So, it does matter. Another thing that she mentioned was that it's not going to be done immediately. What do you have in place to make sure that it doesn't get done at a fast pace? How many buildings are going to be built each year I think you guys discuss that, that's a question.

Mayor Borrow said we have few things going on, we have a lot of people talking about housing, housing is a tiny sliver of this entire parcel that we're talking about the first one which was annexed a year ago it's going to have some higher density it's going to have some apartments and some town homes and the next part would have 113 single family homes, smaller lot sizes, hoping to make it more accessible and affordable. We're talking about that much right there. The rest of it will be business and industry, if this is what the commissioners and all of us vote for. But in terms of, you're asking if we've got a plan and that type of thing. Mr. Zavala asked if we have something that keeps control of how fast it is all done. Mayor Borrow said so the short answer, yes. The longer answer is when they talked about it from the parcel a year ago, they said, they plan to do build-out at about 50 a year until full build-out, which should take close to five years. That was part of their comment, their commitment. This next one with 113 homes, I don't know if we have anything in place for that right now, again, because some of this isn't even proposed. Mr. Zavala said I think you need to think about that too. Mayor Borrow said of course we do if we want to grow at a slower pace, we have to have something in place that gives you the power, the authority, to be able to do it at that pace. Mayor Borrow, we're all on the same page right there. I think there's some sentiment that, hey, they just want to do this. Isn't it a weird idea? This is what we do for a living, especially the city employees and the engineering teams. This isn't some sort of willy-nilly type of just pie-in-the-sky idea. When it comes to things like infrastructure, water lines, roads, these things take years to plan out. And this isn't an idea or a concept that could just happen overnight. So, yes, your point is well taken, but that is what we're doing as well. So, I don't have an answer about the 113 homes, but yes, this is a 5-10-year build-out, and it couldn't take any shorter time I don't think. Mr. Zavala asked what about jobs, Mayor Borrow well, in building the industrial park and other types of retail and commercial,

hopefully that would follow. A lot of this is conjecture, and so I say hopefully it would. Job creation is very high on our list. Economic development is very high on our list. Livability is very high on our list. All the things that you people are passionate about are the things that we're passionate about.

Hi, my name is Bob, and I live in Cornelia, specifically off Duncan Bridge Road. So, we're affected by the proposed construction. You discussed industry coming in. What type of industry are you referring to? You talked about the AI database coming in. You said, well, it doesn't include that, but could it include that if that were the case later on down the line? Mayor Borrow said I'm reluctant to speak for something that happens later. Bob said is there any way we can get something in writing so that we guarantee that this is not going to come in? Can we pass something right now. The other concern, I heard the young lady discuss that the reimbursement to cook and construction is going to come through taxes. City Manager Anderson said we don't reimburse any developers with any infrastructure costs. We never have. That's never even been a suggestion.

Carly said that based on my understanding, the individual taxpayer is... Excuse me. The taxpayers at large are not paying for this development, right? It will be if you purchase a home from a community, my understanding is that the specific individual that purchases the home will have an increased tax to pay back the builder, and then once the builder has been reimbursed the 80 million, then the proposed 80 million, from what I understand.

Mayor Borrow said listen, I'm asking y'all, please, we don't have to shout over the people. You can agree with Carly, you can disagree with Carly. You can agree with David, you can disagree with him but please don't shout them down. I mean, I would imagine if I asked if most of y'all were Christians, your answer would be yes. Well, then let's treat people with respect please. You can agree, you can disagree. Please. So, Carly, did you make your point?

Bob said, "I know you said three minutes. Well, I know a little bit. And the other thing that I have a concern about is the volume of traffic that will be coming into not only the interstate, It's very congested right now. 365 right there is dangerous enough. I think we have somebody killed once a month right now as we go through. I'm very concerned about the well-being of not only my kids, but school buses, kids standing on the roads getting picked up by school buses. Where is the designated site for this construction equipment to go into this area? Is it going to come off Duncan Bridge? Is it going to come off Level Grove? I would assume it's not going to be able to come off the highway."

Mayor Borrow said that's a perfectly fine question. I don't know. I know that based on preliminary conversations, again, you're saying all kinds

of businesses. I don't think anybody has any businesses necessarily in mind. I think there's some dreams of maybe it would be great to have a this or a that.

Danny Almond. I live at 146 Berry Ridge Court. I've done business with a lot of you guys. I'm an appraiser, I'm opposed to the development. I live about 1,000 yards from the intersection of Level Grove and Duncan Bridge. My concern, obviously, is traffic, and I understand that you've been concerned about people coming up with a reason not to do this. A significant reason is the fact that the state has already realized that there's a problem with Highway 365. They're already making changes to the traffic flow on 365, which is going to exacerbate the problem. My biggest concern about the situation is this. I wish you guys would focus on the cities of this county working together and developing a county-wide water system like was proposed in 2019 by the county commission. That has never been worked on, It's never been done and instead of all the cities trying to outdo each other and to try to take over every particular situation, why can't the seven or eight cities in this county get together, develop county-wide sewer, develop county-wide water, and make our growth in a way that everything is conforming instead of everybody doing everything on their own? There's so much duplicity of services here. It's costing us a fortune.

Mayor Borrow said you're 100% right, and that's totally valid feedback. I'll push back a little bit and say that we have tried to work together at various times in the past. We've met down in Banks County talking about region-wide solutions. Have we been able to get anywhere with it? No, not yet, but it has been happening off and on through the years. I think you're exactly right. If you want to be more efficient, does every city need its own fire department? Does every city need its own this? Maybe, maybe not, I don't know. I think these are questions that I feel like you're saying, hey, maybe we could be more efficient in our cost sharing somehow. I'm not advocating one thing or another, but that's what you're saying, right?

Mr. Almond, yeah, I mean, the situation is, I mean, we're just, there is an opportunity for controlled growth. If every city in the county goes out and tries, what's going to happen when Hall County decides they want to run sewer up 365, and we've lost all that money to Hall County? Just like we gave them the hospital.

Mayor Borrow said we had meetings it was probably six months ago, but more within the year, where Baldwin and Cornelia sat down and said, hey, listen, we've got an opportunity heading down south a little bit. We've got the Inland Port coming up. We've got some commercial opportunities. What can we do? I can't remember who all were in the meetings commissioner Venter and the mayor, me, Mr. Anderson, several other people. So, yes, you're right. Have we made the progress we want? No, not even close, but I think you've got some valid points. I can only speak for Cornelia.

We're not trying to outdo anybody. We're just trying to take care of Cornelia. We've got a huge water user in town, we're trying to make sure that our water system is good for not just next year and five years, but 10 years, 20, and 50 years down the road. So, from our perspective, we're not trying to outdo the county or Baldwin. We love to work together.

Mr. Almond said I understand that. My point of view is this, if the people of this county, if the elected people of this county are really for the citizens, then you guys need to figure out how to all work together and make it all work together.

Rick Smith from Mount Airy. I just got a couple of curiosity questions. I'm new to all this, I retired out of the military a couple years back so this is all new to me. We just finished building the new high school in Habersham a few years back and we've gone to a couple of council meetings in Habersham. They're saying we're not going to have that paid for with the renovations to the other schools until 2038. With this growth proposed, where are we going to be able to fund the new schools from?

Mayor Borrow said A hundred percent. A hundred percent and that's a totally valid question, and it's right. You can clap if you want to, that's a valid point.

Mr. Smith said, "I mean, we just finished the water department. Is that going to support this infrastructure? Is the high school going to be able to support this?"

Mayor Borrow said remember, earlier I said, I'm not responding to you, but the people saying no, no. We're going to do our best to make our answers based on facts. So, you're saying how much water is used? The answer is nobody knows how much this is going to be used.

Mr. Smith said my question is not based on how much water we're going to use. My question is where are we going to pay for all this from? Because we're going to have more schools, renovate the schools. We're already in debt now until 2038. So where are we going to get the money from? Our taxes? We're taxed the way we can't afford now.

Mayor Borrow said and here's a response to that about high taxes. We get people coming in telling us we're being taxed enough as it is. Please do something to help us. Economic Development 101 when it comes to cities. You go to any of these workshops; they say businesses are the ones that pay the bills. If you want to have the bills paid, it's industry. It's commercial, they're the ones that help take the burden off the residents.

Mr. Smith said so we're just going to go into debt more by building all this?

Mayor Borrow said not necessarily. So, when it comes to schools, that's a great question. Schools have been in debt I think the whole time because they must build it. We already know that they're going to need new schools and I'd love to hear from the superintendent, but yes, you're exactly right. Yeah, the superintendent already knows, even without any new housing, he says, we're going to need to do an elementary school. I'd love it if we could hold it off for a few years but when we're talking about any type of housing development, we're talking, this is a five-to-ten-year plan.

Mr. Smith said there's more than that, and that's why it's a problem.

Mayor Borrow said although that's already been approved. Yeah, we totally get that. What I'm saying is that the schools recognize that there's going to be growth in the south end of the county, in both Baldwin and potentially in Cornelia. We need to be working with the school system to get that done.

Mr. Smith asked what about our holding systems for the jail system?

Mayor Borrow said, perfectly fine question. You're exactly right. The county must figure it out. We'd like to work with the county. They've got to figure it out. That's the county commission.

My name is Carrie Burnell, Habersham County, outside Clarkesville. I moved here eight years ago to get away from the hustle and bustle of insane city life and I'm not talking about Atlanta. I was a security consultant for 35 years. I know how growth at the level that you guys are just a nice slow growth, which we absolutely need a slow growth initiative. Without that in writing, it's never going to happen. We both know this. People that come after you can speed it up. That initiative must be a place. As far as crime is concerned, that's what you're really looking at when you bring new people in. I've heard them speak about how these homes are going to be for people that exist here. I bought a home when I moved here that they had tried to put on the market three times, and nobody bought it. There are many homes in this county for sale. No, they're not overpriced. So, there's a lot of homes existing now but when you build the way that you're about to build, you are going to see crime slowly increase and it's not as slow as you think it's going to be, guys. For every hundred homes, you're going to have about ten more crimes. People don't generally go in and commit crimes in their own neighborhood, but they will do it in their own county and I'm not talking about theft. That's an easy one. Anybody who tries to rob somebody in Habersham is some kind of stupid. I'm talking about the real bad ones, the home invasions, the ones that are a little harder to stop, that's what you're going to be bringing in. Don't let that happen here people moved here for the beauty for the small town feel so you can get to know your neighbors the more people you bring in that's not going to happen anymore these people are coming from areas that they don't want to talk to their

neighbors the teachers that happen to live in Stephens County and want to live here I've got two homes on my street right now for sale bring it towards me but what you guys are looking for as far as infrastructure we don't have it, you don't even know where you're going to get it yet what you guys are looking for as far as a data center that was a really bad slip of the tongue these people back here are not going to believe you at this point.

Mayor Borrow said it was an example to use. Hey, listen, people are opposed to this, and we don't even know what we're talking about. So, when people mark out from the audience and say, "We can't do this, well, let's make decisions based on facts." We've already established that a data center is not coming at all. It's not part of the formula.

Mrs. Burnell said okay, since we're going to use that as an example, I think one of the best questions up here so far has been about jobs. It's difficult for people here now to find jobs. Okay? Unless you want to work at Ingals or something like that. People are commuting out of town. So, what you're going to get is the same scenario. Either people are going to be still commuting out of town and literally clogging up the highway again. It already takes me three and a half hours to get to Atlanta Airport. Eight years ago, it took me 120 minutes. It's already getting out of hand. In White County, on Highway 29 and 115, look at their stats on accidents lately. It's ridiculous. Am I wrong, guys? Like 40 accidents in the last two months? It's insane and some of them have been fatal. This is not tourists, these are not people going to Dahlonega, these are not people going to Helen. These are locals getting hit because it's just too many people. Now, when people want to come to this area, like I said, they want the southern hospitality. They don't want the crap from the city. And that's what you're going to get

Mayor Borrow said thank you for your feedback.

Good evening. My name is Kathy Crane. I live at 2295 Level Grove Road. I have lived in the Level Grove Road area where I live right now ever since I was two years old. I can remember when there were grape vineyards where United Community Bank is. I have watched this area grow, and I have watched this area change but Level Grove Road is not ready for a housing community because the school is at full capacity. Level Grove Elementary is at full capacity. The sewage system down through there stinks. I have lived there all my life. It has a nickname called SHIT Creek. And sometimes you can smell it, and it smells just like a sewer. We're just not ready for that growth on Level Grove Road. I might be mistaken, but I think there might be a clause in that deed that says that that is to be used for a church or a church facility, such as youth housing or something like that. So, you need to go back and look at that deed real close before it is actually approved for a housing community. Before you use that property for housing facilities, you really need to worry about getting Cornelia Citizens another grocery store. When you go

to Walmart, you walk on each other's heels. When you go to Ingals, you walk on each other's heels. When you go to Quality Foods, that's all we have. You really need to think about growth for Cornelia before you worry about housing on Level Grove Road. It takes me 30 minutes sometimes to get out of my driveway if you go out during school time because the traffic is backed up all the way past school. Not only in that direction, but the other direction with the four-way stop. So, you really need to consider all that before you decide on housing for that area.

Mayor Borrow said thank you. I appreciate it. As a response, we have the city of Cornelia, of course, isn't in charge of private development. We've been in talks with various grocers for many, many years about coming to town. I can't tell you who they are, but a lot of you probably heard on Facebook and rumors and such. We have talked about that. We hear what you're saying. We want to do things that serve our citizens and our community better. You're exactly right.

I'm Gay Davis, and I'm a real estate agent with Keller Williams but that's not even important to what I have to say. I was born at the hospital in Demorest, and I have lived inside the city limits of Cornelia since I was eight years old. This is my home and I have a couple of questions. One is the data center. You say it is not coming to Cornelia. Is it coming to Habersham County?

Mayor Borrow said not that I know of. There's a small one in Baldwin right now. Other than that, I'm not aware of anything else going on.

Ms. Davis said that was my first question. The second question is, we're talking about this development. Has it already been approved? The first parcel, the 36 acres, the one that I already forgot your name, Ms. Crane, who was saying we need to look at the title and so on. That was annexed into the city of Cornelia one year ago at the December 2024 meeting. She said there's no going back on that one. It's done. Correct?

Mayor Borrow said so we've had attorneys look at this. Mr. Campbell, do you want to weigh in on this at all?

City Attorney said I can tell you all, but I think that ship has sailed. You can take that up with the church or whoever. That property got sold for value like several years ago. So, this issue was brought to me and I looked at this title and the property was, if I remember correctly, was originally purchased by the Corinthian Church of God back in 1998 from Mr. Benfield. Okay? And there were some conditions in this deed that was created, but the deed is from Mr. Benfield. It's not the church. It has some conditions, I guess, put in it. Subsequently, I think, and I don't know all the facts and circumstances between the Church of God, the Baldwin Church of God, and the Torch, and how that all played out. I don't know, but what I do know is that from the deed records, if you look at the deed from, I think it's the Torch to PIMO LLC, there was value, \$300,000 paid in that transaction. You're a third-party purchaser

for value. Which means trying to go back and then re-litigate over matters where that property has changed hands where somebody paid money for it, like nothing to do with the original transactions. Also, my understanding, subsequently, was being told that there was an approval of it by the Church. All we can do is look at the title and look at the deed, and that's what it shows. The problem is the people involved in those transactions accepted them, signed deeds, transacted money, and moved on. Is it possible? So then subsequently that property was brought before the city for an annexation and had a proposal about how it could be developed, and the city annexed that proposal with certain conditions. That's done. That annexation is done. If there's some issue between the church and how it all worked out, that's for them to explore. At this point, we're not here to go litigate people's other civil matters. Those are civil things that people can sue each other about. That doesn't affect our annexation involving what appears to be a good party, a good faith purchaser for value, and a title landowner that we look at and go, okay, you're the owner, they can request annexation. All we've done is annex it and set zoning for it. We haven't done anything else. You may not love annexation, you may not love the zoning, I don't know but those things were done in a legal fashion. If people want to take it up, and I hear these kind of issues where people, I'm going to tell you, y'all may not know me, but I'm the judge of State Court for this county. I've been an elect official for 30 years. I've lived in Cornelia since 1991, I guess. I came to Habersham in 89, my wife was born and raised here. She probably won't say that. At the same time, I'm here to tell you all, people love to run their gaps and then not go spend any money to fix the issue. You know, if you really want to go do something, do it. You know, I just got to tell you, this is as a citizen and not as a judge or a lawyer or a city attorney or nothing. Just go do something. Don't sit back and complain. Go get involved. Like this development plan, I'm just going to talk a little bit. This development plan that the mayor was talking about a while ago, so all I'm saying is that these things take participation early. We come to meetings here and there are two people here. Because if y'all get involved in all the different aspects that lead to growth and development initiatives or whatever else you want to get involved with, with all kinds of different aspects, counties, seven different cities, I guess, really, to Talulah Falls, Baldwin, Mount Airy, Clarksville, Demorest, Cornelia, Alto. I mean, how many different ways are there to get involved in this county? Go, start working from the ground up, because then when these things come to us and they check all the boxes that the development plan says, and then you come in the last minute and say, oh my God, this is horrible. This thing's been brewing for a long, long time.

Ms. Davis said "did I hear correctly when Carly, whoever she is, was up here saying that the homes were going to be in the \$200,000 range? Has anybody stopped and thought about that? A \$200,000 home? And who's going to move in? I mean, we're setting ourselves up, just like this lady said,

I'm sorry, I don't remember your name, but we're setting ourselves up for crime to just move right there. And I wish you would really think about that.”

Mayor Borrow said Yes, ma'am, and I appreciate it. Kind of where we're coming from, I'm going to take about another minute or so. Cornelia was chosen to be part of the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing, and it's called GICH. We've got 30 community stakeholders, school principals, non-profit directors, and civil engineers. What we hear from people is, let's say there's a young married couple, teacher or a policeman, I can't afford a \$350,000 house. We need something else, that's what we're hearing, but I also hear, hey, listen, who are you going to attract? We don't want crime. We don't want more traffic. We don't want more bad stuff, but we're also hearing from people, I want to live here and I can't afford to. I work in Habersham, I'm a nurse, I can't do this. I'm a teacher. So, this is what we've been hearing for the past 10 years. Let me assure you, we're hearing what you're saying right now also, but here's a chance to figure out.

Ms. Davis said I was a single mom with four kids. I survived here.

Mayor Borrow said listen, you and I are on the same page. To tell you the truth, most of us are on the same page. This is part of the county's comprehensive plan. This is part of Cornelia's comprehensive plan.

Ms. Davis said I've let it slip in because I wasn't paying attention.

Mayor Borrow said I think that was Steve Campbell's point. There's lots of ways to get involved. Let's pay more attention, yes pay more attention. When we held the public hearing to build this, I don't even know the dollar amount, I mean, like \$10 million for fire station and all this stuff. You know how many people showed up? Crickets. You know how many people showed up for a yield sign on Grand Avenue and Berry Street? 50. I understand the people trust us to make the best decisions financially and so on, but we would love more civic engagement. I see Blane and Kathy back there. Y'all have been to just about every meeting. You know we treat people with respect. We let everybody talk about what they want to, whether we agree with them or not. So, I hear exactly what you're saying, Ms. Davis, and I appreciate you. I appreciate how you're saying it.

Ms. Davis said she is concerned about the traffic

Mayor Borrow said we've talked with state representatives as well, trying to get Duncan Bridge and 365 moved up the DOT priority list. GDOT is tough to work with, they've got a lot on their plate and have a budget just like everybody else. Tell you the truth, we would love to see better lighting on the stretch of 441 between Burger King and Walmart. We'd love to see all sorts of different things. They say, “We hear you. Take a number.” So yes, you're exactly right. But thank you so much.

Ms. Davis said I have one more thing to say. You just finished you actually opened it up for me you said trust us ah yeah did he not say that okay your city attorney I'm sorry I'm going to say this not in a nice way and I have been very involved in politics in my life when he blabs his damn mouth and he runs it. It makes everybody here; he's trying to make us all look like idiots. Like we're a little slow. He's making all of you look bad. What he did, though, is he's making everybody here who's already trying to trust you, they've trusted you in the past. So, if they have ignored things like the fire department, they trusted you. Now something came in that no one's heard about. Because it was posted on your site. It was so quiet, nobody saw it. It may have been posted on your site, but not everybody was online 24-7 unless somebody wakes up, and that's what happened with this. People woke up. They don't want this. They're not happy with it, and because of this, because they hadn't heard about it, you have lost their trust. So, you might want to consider getting a new attorney

Mayor Borrow said if I may respond, nobody's up here saying trust us, I think the point that I was trying to make in context was that a lot of people trust us to make decisions with city finances and big things but that wasn't a patronizing comment, we know it's right of course not I want to make sure that I'm clear. So, I want to make sure I'm not telling people, don't trust us. Show up. Hold us accountable. That's what we do. Newspapers are here. It's on Facebook. We love it. We absolutely do, and it may be unpleasant. I don't like people shouting over each other. I don't like people being called names, but we are all ears. I hope that comes through, that we are humble enough to listen to you, that we want to hear your perspective, but I also need you all to know that we have been listening to people for 10 years that aren't here right now. Maybe some are, I don't know. People saying, hey, please help us, and that's how we got where we are. I hope that makes sense.

Mayor Borrow said that I'm not trying to talk down to anybody. I'm not trying to shout them down or anything like that. I want to treat everybody here with dignity and respect. I really do. So, yes, ma'am. Keep going.

Ms. Crane said I kind of want to explain something about the Level Grove property. I was a member of Cornelia Church of God when that property was purchased. We changed our name to Life Church, which is now the old Baldwin Church of God, which our pastor at that time and some of our deacons traded that property to the Torch for that Baldwin building. Okay, so, but in the deed, it stated that the property was to be used for a church building or activity center, something to do with church. We were under the impression when we traded all that property that it would be used for a life center or a youth center or something by the Torch and how it got sold from the Torch congregation without the congregation I've talked to several people and they knew nothing about the property how it got traded and how the Cooks ended up with it nobody

knows. But I do know that it was sold cheaper than what it was actually purchased for. So, does everybody understand that? 23 years later.

Mayor Borrow said all right. So, we've got people saying it may have been legal, but it might not have been right. The reason I'm saying that is because there's people watching on Facebook and on the Internet who can't hear what people are saying in the audience.

My name is Elijah Mulholland. I appreciate your patience. I'm not going to speak as well as everybody else here did. My first question, you said that there was going to be development coming, I guess some of it's going to be on Level Grove Road. But you don't know what the development is. How do you develop something if you don't know what it is you're developing? How do you plan for traffic and tourism, how's the flow going to affect the community?

Mayor Borrow said so the first parcel up there, that 36 acres, we know what that's going to be. After that, how it comes in and how it's laid out. We see renderings, we see roads and infrastructure plans and that type of thing, and requests for zoning for high industrial use or manufacturing or light industrial or commercial. When I say we don't know what it's going to look like, I think that specifically, I don't know if it's going to be an Olive Garden or a Home Depot or whatever. We won't know the specifics of it until, if this thing even passes, we won't know what it is until they start coming up with plans and doing a feasibility study and so on.

Mr. Mulholland so, other than that, you mentioned that Habersham would benefit from a higher density population or maybe more people moving in, there's a higher density, and somehow that's going to affect people making more money in one way, shape, or another, being able to afford housing?

Mayor Borrow said what that does economically is when it develops housing instead of having say a one acre minimum lot size that's out in the country, you're able to split the cost of infrastructure, water and electrical, into a smaller footprint and that distributes the infrastructure cost which would ultimately in theory result in a lower entry price. So, whether it's 200,000 or the 200s, I don't know what anybody's talking about. It could be 290 for all I know. I don't know off the top of my head.

Mr. Mulholland, I took it to mean a higher population density. So, you're saying a lot of people who are already working and living here in Habersham, but they have to commute out of Habersham living elsewhere. You're trying to get them to move back here with new housing. How do you ensure that they're the ones that get the housing instead of people from higher income areas coming down and buying up the housing and moving in for themselves faster? How do we ensure that Habersham residents have the first choice so that we're not moved out of our own county first?

Mayor Borrow said that the city doesn't necessarily, the county doesn't necessarily say, no, you can't do it because it's a private transaction between property owners. I don't know how to ensure that only average in county people buy houses. Mayor Borrow thanked him for coming.

I'm David Oppenheimer, I am an interloper. I moved here from Jackson County 11 years ago, where I lived there for 20 years, and I'm not either for or against this. But I do want to caution people that just like our national economy, unless it is growing, you will stagnate. If you want your children and your grandchildren to stay here close by, you have to have balanced growth. Of course, that is the job of you on the council. In Jackson County, I went through this. I was involved with government down there in a way, and we did some infrastructure things that the county eventually benefited greatly from. Everyone got kicked off of the county government. So, this may happen. You may have to consider that as a blessing, but I've watched y'all since I've moved here and I think y'all have done an excellent job. It is about balance growth, and I know you have that in mind. That is what our planning commissions are for. You know, when a project comes in, it still must meet certain criteria that it's not disturbing everything around it. Granted, if I was living right next to this, I would be just like one of the other landowners that said, I don't want this because I may not want the light pollution or the noise that comes from it. Well, that's when it comes to the planning commission, that's where they ask for certain setbacks. We have regulations that certain things must be done properly. That is what these people up here are here to do. I thank you all for your service, and I hope you stay in office.

Mayor Borrow thanked him for being here.

Good evening. I'm Jeanette Byron. I live in the Pea Ridge, Duncan Bridge area. I'm kind of opposed to this. I'm a new comrade. I've lived here since 1999. And we moved here because it was peaceful. It was not a city. It was friendly. Everybody was friendly. My husband actually worked down in Suwanee, he worked in Atlanta, he worked in Tennessee. We stayed here. My daughter and I stayed here because this is where we wanted to be. He was military. I had 20 years of living on top of people and people living on top of me. That's not what I want for here. If you want to see what concentrated housing looks like all you got to do is go anywhere in Gainesville. Anytime you go through there and you see apartment complexes; you see townhomes after five years they're trash homes. So, you're asking if you're going to be building houses for \$200,000, you're going to get everybody and if the Habersham homeless people can afford homes for \$200,000, that'd be awesome. But you're going to get them from Hall County, you're going to get them from everywhere, and we will become a county of homeless people in houses that they can afford. It doesn't make sense to me that if you can afford a \$200,000 home, you wouldn't be homeless. Because there are apartments. It's the same thing. I don't

understand how \$200,000 homes are going to fix a homeless problem. The point that she made over there. Most of the people that I knew when I lived, when we first moved here, none of them worked here. They lived here. They spent their money here, but they lived outside of, or they worked out of the county. That's what makes this nice for me, is that everybody is a community. We live where we work. I think it's, being military, I've never been able to work in the same county that I lived. So, I've always had to travel. When I lived in Houston, I lived 30 miles from where I worked. And it took me an hour and a half to get there. No problem. Because that was just part of the life. When we moved here, my husband told me that I had to live with him. I had to find a house within an hour of where he worked. This is where I wanted to be and it took me nine months to find a house where I wanted to be, but I found it. I don't want to leave just because y'all are going to turn it into Hall County. Please don't turn it into Hall County.

Mayor Borrow said "I don't think anybody wants this to become Hall county but you've got a valid point, and it's not lost on us." The other side is the county commission and cities and everybody else has said, the interstate is where we want to grow. That's why we are here, but we're also here because some of you are saying, "No, we don't want this".

Allen Fox, I live in Alto, grew up in Cornelia. I know a lot of people here, which is weird. I also serve. We were elected at the same time, so we met a few years ago down in Athens, actually, right before the world stopped. Mayor and members of the council, I want to speak briefly and plainly about the proposed eminent domain ordinance tied to private development. Eminent domain is one of the most powerful tools available to government. Exercising that authority is overreach, I think. History shows it leads to public backlash, community division, and long-term distrust in government leadership. Private property rights are not a partisan issue. They're actually one of the only values that unite people across political lines. When community members hear community leaders, like you and I, talk about considering expanded condemnation powers in a way that could support private projects, they immediately become concerned. That concern is clearly already circulating in our community. The rights of individuals to hold and enjoy their private property should never be infringed upon simply because a developer wants land they have not secured through a voluntary, mutually agreed upon transaction. Just because something is legally possible, as you have said and others, does not make it right and when government uses its authority to tip the scales for private interests, it sends exactly the wrong message about whose side it's on. Even if we assume that the current intentions of city officials are good and genuine, putting an ordinance like this on the books creates a risk, which is my concern. Future leadership, which could be less capable, less ethical, or outright corrupt, may use or misuse the authority given in ways its authors never intended. The history of our country and our state make this very clear. Power granted

today can absolutely be abused tomorrow. My own family, the reason I'm here is an example of what is at stake. Not I, but my family owns about 21 acres, roughly half a mile from the current city limit sign, one of the last small farm operations left in this part of the county. At this time, we have no intention of selling. I don't think my concern is about today's leadership at all, but about what might happen in 20, 30, or 50 years from now, if part of an ordinance like this remains on the books. Policies of today outlive the people who pass them into law. A future administration could easily see land like ours, my family's, not mine actually, as real estate and use this ordinance in ways that no one in this room supports today. I grant you that. That's exactly why such powers must remain narrow and carefully controlled. It's my opinion that this ordinance risks undermining public trust at a time when our community needs stability, transparency, and confidence from its leaders. I urge you, therefore, to withdraw this measure, please, and avoid creating more unnecessary controversy that does not strengthen our community. Thank you.

Mayor Borrow said we're all on the same page and eminent domain has historically only ever been used for public roads, water, wastewater or something like that and that's the context we're talking about here. There's a famous Supreme Court case called Kelo versus New London in Connecticut after that happened the state of Georgia said that's not allowed in the state of Georgia it's not allowed and nobody on this I don't know if I should speak for them, but we've all talked. Nobody on this commission has an appetite for any of that.

First, thank you for your service. Public service is just that. My name is David Elder. I moved to Habersham County in 1996 with my wife and a three- and two-year-old. We escaped Athens, Georgia because Athens, Georgia, when I grew up, was a small, quiet college town. My grandmother, Dairy farmed on 365 acres outside of Athens in Clark County. I watched Athens grow and become something that I would not move back to. You couldn't give me enough money to move back to Athens. That's why we moved here. We raised our kids here in this county. Our kids graduated in 2012 and 2013. I will tell you this, based on what I heard earlier, on the levels of competency, it has gone down in that time. What I will tell those here tonight, don't wait until it's at this point to get involved. Even if it is something minor, go and be a voice. You are the voice for this county. I was not going to be here because this was a city of Cornelia issue. But everything's coming up 365, just like Georgia 400. You all remember when Dawsonville was small. It's not that way anymore. So that is going to come here. I've seen this county change in 20 years, and it's not always for the best. Growth is inevitable, yes, but it must be positive and controlled growth. We knew that when we moved here that to go eat at a nice restaurant, we had to go to Gainesville or Athens. We made that sacrifice. So, there are sacrifices that have to be made. If you want growth, you can't say you don't want this on one hand, but

yet want this on the other because you're talking out of both sides of your mouth. So, the people of this county have to get involved. People, don't wait until it gets to this point. You have the final voice in this, one way or the other. If you don't like the city of Cornelia or Demorest or Baldwin, get out, voice your concerns. Vote people out of office if they're not representing you. Now with that said, this county, I saw Athens went through a point. It was Athens and Clark County, two separate entities. They never could get along, always squabbling, always going back and forth. This county needs to do something about getting all the municipalities together and being one voice and doing what's best for this county. Or this county, like I said, is going to be another Dawsonville. I see it in Blue Ridge. I have family in Blue Ridge. I see the way Blue Ridge has gone. It's not good. There can be growth, but it must be controlled and measured. So, Mayor Barrow, thank you so much for your time, Councilman. Thank you for listening to me. Thank you all.

Mike Roberts, true native, like Ms. Davis. I grew up here, educated here. A couple of questions. It's obvious nobody wants this type of growth. Okay. When I graduated high school, entered in the United States Marine Corps, my wife and I were both in the marines, we came home. Clarksville, Cornelia, Habersham County, nobody provided me with housing. We got three jobs. We saved our money. We bought a piece of property. And I went to school with Mark Reed, graduated with him. He knows this. We worked hard. And we obtained what we have through hard work. My question is, why does a city need to provide housing? For the individuals, let them come, let them work hard, let them obtain that.

Mayor Barrow said the city is not providing housing.

Mr. Roberts said when I built my house, it was 10% interest rate in the 80s. My question is, why are we even doing this? It's obvious nobody wants this. There's too much growth. Everything is, nobody wants it. But here's the solution. You've already annexed in that piece of property. There's nothing we can do about that. So why not do not annex any of the 284 acres? Just work on that one piece of property. Develop that one piece of property. See how it goes. Because there's nothing we can do to stop it. But take it, it's like eating an elephant. How do you do that? One bite at a time. You're biting off a whole elephant here. Why not back away from this? If cooked properties really want this, they'll wait on it. I'm giving you a solution. I'm not for it because my son and I, we got 30 acres right next to the J Warren property that's going to border us. It will be an active farm. Cattle, chicken houses possibly. And just like every red-blooded American, we shoot guns and we shoot pistols. We're going to be budded up to the city property. And that's not going to be good. Because they're going to call, hey, somebody's shooting. We're in the county. But my solution would be, why don't you just back away for a little bit? Do this one project of that little growth road. See how that goes. If it goes good, let the people see what

Cook can build for us. how it impacts our community to see if you want to go forward with the rest of the annexation. That would be my solution.

Mayor Borrow thanked him for coming!

Martha Stuckey said I'd like to say something just really quick. I don't know if I can do it or not. I've been disabled for 20 years, and I've lost a lot, and I'm fixing to lose my last acre. And I just live at the red light on Duncan Bridge in 365. I own the land up on the hill. It used to be Hubert Harris' land. I used to be a Harris. And I lost it. And now I've got one acre left because I have been disabled both mentally and physically. And I'm just pulling out of it. Two weeks ago, I found out what was wrong, and I can now talk. So it wasn't that I didn't want to, so I couldn't. But I've been offered. I haven't signed any contracts because I don't trust. Alice Venter read the letter from Ms. Stuckey, I know you know my sister. Absolutely. I've got a lot of stuff on here, but this is the last one. Okay. This is the last one. And this is from a realtor that works for Mr. Cook.

I won't say the amount. I just wanted to check in and see if y'all were ready to talk again. Not sure if y'all saw the Northeast origin, but the plans submitted show a 200-acre development, except for a tiny outline of Martha's residence in the center. There's still time to alter the plans. But once too much investment goes into engineered site plans, with leaving Martha's house there, There won't be any turning back. I'm a realtor. I won't say that. Please don't think I'm trying to be pushy. I'm just trying to make sure y'all have all of the information. Sometimes timing doesn't always line up life circumstances. But this is a matter of permanently being surrounded. Are you kidding me? I'm serious. But this is a matter of permanently being surrounded by warehouses that could operate at odd hours, big trucks, sounds, smells, and pollutants. I just don't want this opportunity to relocate out of this situation to pass y'all by. If it does, you're risking only getting maybe half of what this offer is, which will not be enough to buy something else. Is that your agent? Is that your agent that said that? Oh, okay. I know Martha hasn't been feeling well, and I wish the timing was different. I'm just trying to do the right thing. I don't want to talk. That's very unethical as a real setting. I do not like this lady. That is true. I don't like this.

Mayor Borrow, All right, Martha, what's your last name?

Miss Martha Stuckey.

Mayor Borrow asked Miss Stuckey? Was there anything you wanted to add to that?

She said well, I just, I've done a lot of research. I love research.

Mayor Borrow said I'm going to kind of repeat some of the stuff that you're saying because people can hear you've done a lot of research.

Ms. Stuckey Yes, and what I'm seeing, I'm looking at the codes, the zoning codes, because that's what's worrying me. Because where I live at the red light on Duncan Bridge and 365, it's from what I could tell from the city of Cornelia zoning codes, it's HB, which is highway business, is that correct? Not what they're wanting to do. It's HB. I don't understand why you can do the zoning if you don't have any plans of what's going to be there. And I looked at it as like businesses.

Mayor Borrow said so the way the zoning works is you have to get the zoning right and then they get to say, okay, here's the businesses that we're looking for. It's just a procedural thing. But we heard that 10 times.

Ms. Stuckey, I don't see warehouses going in on something that's zoned, HB. Highway business. Yeah. I mean, it may. I don't know everything. And neither do we. But I live there still on one acre of land, so I don't have left because others took from me when I became disabled. I never missed a payment. But when certain banks come in, it was taken from me. I know I'm not the only one. But I just don't want to lose everything I've got. That's all I've got left.

Mayor Borrow so did you have anything else you want to add?

Ms. Stuckey said the data center is all. When I look up the Apple, I can't remember, memory is part of my disability. But whatever it says, the Apple. The only thing I can find is the data center. I can't find any plans for anything else.

Mayor Borrow said again, data centers are not an approved use, and there's no plans for anything, and there's no plans going forward. It's not even allowed.

My name's Brooke and I live in Cornelia. I take care of my grandpa or help take care of him. and I help take care of another grandma that also lives in the county. My grandma, I'm not a public speaker, and I may get tearful, and I'm sorry. My grandpa has worked his entire life for his farm. And I mean his entire life since he's been eight years old. His daddy died, and he's been working ever since. It is the only pleasure my grandpa has left in this life. and the Cook realtor or whatever, came to my grandpa's house and I lived with him and my mom goes and stays with him during the day. And I drove by and I saw a truck I didn't know and thank God I came in because he had let somebody in the house that we don't know and it was the realtors and they were trying to persuade him to sell our family part. I am a third-generation cattle farmer. I am raising the fourth-generation cattle farmer. And that is our legacy. And these people are trying to take advantage of these elderly people. And that is the worst thing in the world. This farmland is meant for the generations to come. So, my children plan on farming for the rest of their lives, raising their kids and so on and so forth. And all the farmland around us is also a family that's kin to us, distantly in some

form, some fashion. But it would be a disservice to them. And these elderly people need to be protected, and they're not being protected right now. If I had not come in, I really feel like my grandpa would have been manipulated. And that's not okay. That's not okay at all. So, I don't know if I'm going to try to force it in a domain. I'm very against it. I'm very against the growth. Both of my kids go to Habersham County Schools. I went to Cornelia School. I went to South. I went to Central. I went to the 9th grade academy. I was in the first class there. And I went to North Georgia Tech. I plan on raising my kids here, but I can't raise my kids here if there's going to be such distrust. And there's a lot of manipulation going on with these companies. Whether it's the realtors, whether it's the developers or whatnot. And that's all I've got to say.

Mayor Borrow thanked her for her feedback.

I'm Donna Shirley, and I'm a 70-year-old retired lady. I worked for 45 years in Habersham County. I attended Habersham County Schools. My family goes back to my great-grandfather owning property in Habersham County. And I've kept my mouth shut through all this until this lady got up. I know five other people that own large tracts of land in the Mud Creek, Leve Grove area that these realtors have contacted. I spoke to one of them. What are you going to do with my mom's project? Oh, we're going to build houses. What's put in his mind that he's going to do to our county if they're wanting all these large tracts of land in that one area? Are they going to destroy our county and make it look like Wigand and Hawke County? I'd say they are. And if you don't stop this, it's going to get worse. And it's your responsibility and our responsibility as citizens of Habersham County and residents of the city of Coney, to speak our mind and stand up for things like this happening to our elderly relatives that don't need to be preyed on by these greedy developers. This is aggressive growth that we don't need. I'm not against growth. I was married to a builder. That's what we lived on, is his money from building houses and me working at a local bank. There's nothing wrong with working hard for your money and buying a house, but when you build houses as quickly as they build them, they're not quality houses. I read a letter that a lady wrote to the Northeast Georgians several years ago, and she was talking about the trouble that she had with her house. I approached two of our county commissioners. You know what one of them basically told me? Liar beware. Well, let's beware. Let's take care of our county and our citizens. All right. Thank you.

My name's Rebecca Williams. I'm in Mount Airy. And I think, like most everybody in here, we're all from here. And we've all seen what's happened to our state, slowly and surely. We've watched it be destroyed one county at a time, and this is one of our last strongholds. And don't let that happen here. People do move here. They're moving out. We have 13 new houses out where I live, and not one single person is from

Habersham County, as one of the gentlemen had said. And I know you say that you hope when these new houses are built, Habersham County residents are going to live there. On the street my aunt lives on, there is not one single person on her entire street, and there are 22 houses and not one single person from Habersham County. And nobody that's bought in them new houses up where we are, I mean, they're brand-spanking new. And they, just like the last lady said, they throw them right up. And I build houses. I built my own houses for years. And I can't afford to pay some money, so I don't have to do it myself. But another thing somebody else has addressed is my biggest concern also is with the proposed industry to come in or the highway businesses to come in. I think that when that happens, we lose support of our small family businesses. We don't go to our small family restaurants. We're not supporting our neighbors. We're not supporting our local friends and family anymore because people are like, oh, well, we'll go to Olive Garden. And another gentleman said, yeah, go to your local feed stores. That's our neighbors. That's who lives here. That's who we support. We don't want to support corporate conglomerates. They're lying in their pockets. We want to support our neighbors. No different than any of y'all that might own a business, I do my best to call a local person to do any work that I need because I believe in supporting our neighbors. And when you get all these big businesses, these anchor stores, most of these people, as you can tell, don't want them either. We want our small community, and we want to live and know each other and take care of each other. And then the last thing I'm going to add real quick is also when we get all these extra people in here, just like these fine gentlemen over here know, we have a lot more traffic accidents. That raises our car insurance. And I think anyone also who's here from Georgia, I don't know that any of us have ever seen growth lower our property taxes.

Mayor Borrow said thank you for your comments.

Good evening. My name is Rick Triven. I live in Clarksville, right out on 17. I want to mention one word, and that's compromise. And when you compromise, that's a very slippery slope. And there are places in the country that, you know, I would like to live, but I can't afford it. And if you can't afford to live in a house in Habersham County, maybe you shouldn't be in Habersham County. I don't think we need to compromise and lower our standards to build houses that are \$200,000. And when you talk about bringing all these businesses in, what I've seen in the past is they get all kinds of tax breaks as incentives to come in. And how does that really help us as homeowners and property owners?

Mayor Borrow said that happens through the county and they are the industrial development authority and if a business wants to come to town that's big enough and it creates enough jobs and there's enough spent then they get some sort of tiered county property tax abatement or something like that but that's not typical from cities and if we're

talking about the things we're talking about here like maybe, I'm just going to pretend there's an Olive Garden or a Home Depot. Those probably don't qualify. They may. They can go to the county and ask for the tax abatement. Well, compromise also goes to the landfill. I mean, that's a big issue. It totally is. Anyway, thank you for listening to us. Compromise. We don't want to do that.

My name's Elise Behrens, and I live in Huntington Manor off Old Cleveland and I know you guys keep stressing that there is no data center coming, but my question for you is then why does outside source, the datamapcenters.com, list both the Cornelia address and the Gainesville address as being planned data center locations, but not listed under Georgia. You can't find it under Georgia. You find them listed under the state of Virginia. When you click on Virginia, and you zoom in, it zooms in to our location at the Level Grove. Was it the 1900? And this is what their website says. I know someone had addressed it, and they did sit there and archived it. But this is when this thing first came out, and I was trying to find, okay, well, it's an outside source for it, because I know there were people saying, obviously, Cook wasn't happy about it. Well, Cook's advertising on this website also. Like I said, it says Big Red Apple Innovation Corridor, Cook Construction and Real Estate, 1900 Lovell Grove Road, 30531, Cornelia, Virginia, USA. And what it says is the Big Red Apple Innovation Corridor, located at 1900 Level Grove Road in Cornelia, Georgia, is a proposed 284-acre mixed-use development by a real estate firm, The Cook & Company. This project, situated approximately 75 miles northeast of Atlanta in Habersham County, will feature residential, commercial, retail, and industrial components. A portion of the development is designated for a data center, though specific details regarding its size or capacity have not been disclosed. The overall project is valued at \$300 million and is planned to be developed in phases with the first phase scheduled to commence in 2028 and conclude around 2035. The development's parcels will run parallel to Highway 365 South between Level Grove Road and Duncan Bridge Road. Cook Construction and Real Estate, based in Gainesville, Georgia, is known for a traditional focus on residential and community developments. If you're looking for a co-location, cloud, connectivity, or other services in the Big Red Apple Innovation Corridor, other data centers in Gainesville are operated by Cook Construction and Real Estate. Please try our free quote services or reach out for a free consultation about your data center needs. We also use the best-efforts process to qualify opportunities and route them to matching operators. And again, you have a list. If you look at the nearest data centers, they're all over Georgia. In our area, within 18 miles, 23 miles, 37 miles, 43 miles. It just goes on and on. But like I said, when you go on there, it's all listed under Virginia. It's not listed under Georgia. But you go and read in the paragraph. So that's why you say there's no data center, and it's hidden in the state of Virginia. What's the truth?

Ms. Behrens, you can say that all you want, but then why is there documentation from an outside resource stating those things? And that's, I guess, why the confusion is the trust.

Mayor Borrow said No, I totally get that.

Ms. Behrens said It's very shady.

Mayor Borrow said it is shady, but we don't have anything to do with that. I saw a link to the article. And it's clearly talking about Cornelia and Gainesville, it's not an approved use.

Ms. Behrens, I understand that it's not approved, but why would an outside source have that? And again, it's not just us. Gainesville was also stated as being in the state of Virginia. And then outside of that, just what's that is. The thing is, you know, part of the thing with Cornelia here in Gainesville, it was just as ignorant because that's your tourism, that's your water that you're drinking. Why are we entertaining this even down the road? Because someone's going to open the door to allow that stuff in here. Just like, you know, the county. Like, I live outside the county, but what's going on here, this annexation, is like right by my house. But I have no say because I don't live in the city, and the county said no. But the city can sit there and just grab and do what they want to anyways. It affects our water. It affects our day-to-day life with the traffic. I mean, we get off at 365 and we just go down 441, or we just stay out by Cleveland or Helen, we'll go out to Cornelia. We'll stay away from this area, and we're just magnifying all that. And again, our water is huge. Our electric bill is huge. I know we have HEMC, but I know other people here have the Georgia Power Company, and those prices are ridiculous just when we see winter prices. You know, just comparing online when people are commenting on how high the bill's got. So, I guess that's why the thing is there's just a lot of damage coming. There's a lot of secrecy. You say no, but why is it that you have a big real estate investment who also opened a lot of LLCs very close together, more than one person did, that has been involved with this chaos. Both groups have sat there and opened a number of LLCs recently within, especially around, I want to say it was like 2021, within months of each other. And I don't know if that was for land acquisition to sit there to purchase, to sit there and sell more. When he's sitting there saying look up and research, we did.

Hi there. My name's Terry. I live actually in Demorest, Georgia, but I'm power of attorney for my father who has property on Level Grove Road. I want you to be aware of a realtor also that showed up at my father's house with VIP, stuck a newspaper, not a newspaper, but a note on a piece of paper, stuck it in the door. I invited them to leave quickly because, here again, they were trying to offer him bottom dollar for his property. Thank God I was there. And they said, oh, but y'all can move to West Virginia since you like the mountains. And I said, get the hell out of

the house. I like Habersham and I was born here in 1965. My mother was an educator. My father worked at Standard Telephone. My grandfather used to own Bryson's Auto Parts before it was Bryson's Auto Parts. Like several people here, we are Habersham County. We have been here. Our blood and roots of our ancestors are here. I'm not going anywhere. And let me assure you, you are forgetting a very strong population. Childcare providers. Have you thought about the childcare? If we don't, if we can have all the jobs in the world, but if we don't have child care, where are these children going? Who's going to look after them? You haven't even thought about that. girl that spoke first. I can't remember her name. Georgia's reading rates are very low. Yes, you're right. But let me assure you, in early care and learning, we're working very hard to bring those up. And we cannot do that with our classrooms crowded in early care or in the school system. So, I urge you, I urge you to please, please, please think about what you're doing. Think about it. Think about your grandchildren's children. What do you want them to see? I know my grandpa and grandmother that lived right over on Wayside in Galloway, they didn't want this for Cornelia. Please thank you. Please. Thank you.

I'm Sandy and I live outside the city of Cornelia. So that's why I'm addressing the data center. Because you keep saying the city of Cornelia. But I do have some stats about how much water the data center uses 1 million to 6.5 million gallons a day. The only ones that recycle it are extremely rare. I know of one in Georgia. It's Google. You ain't going to go and find a lot of these that's recycling the water. It's just not happening. And, we are one of the top states in the United States for new data centers. It's a fact. Nobody can go against that. And 100 to 299 is what we have already. And one of the reasons we have that is because Georgia Power is offering these people 42% lower rates than the rest. 42% is very low. But guess what happens? Anybody else's electric being going up? Electric don't just go up in the county that it's built in. It goes up state. And I have a QR code. It's actually on my phone if anybody wants it. Talking about the Fayette County Data Center, they're living in hell down there. And one of the people, I don't know if they're on the council or something, she goes, well, I'm apologetic to the 200 people that it's adversely affecting. But we have to think about the whole. And they're making millions of dollars. It's in her words. And I can share anybody that wants to scan my QR code. You can do that. But, and one thing, because we live outside the county, and I know you keep saying the city of Cornelia, the ones in the county, we want to guarantee that it ain't going to come in in Habersham County. Because Chattahoochee River also is prone to drought, and somebody earlier said that the reservoir is lower. So, us folks in the county don't want to get screwed. I'll just tell you. And my mother-in-law's over here. We moved my mother-in-law and father-in-law up here because he was sick. He has now passed away and we're staying with her. But her home, that is her money she's given to her three children when she goes on. And she doesn't want the prices to screw up that home. If nobody's...

You don't know what's going to happen. Like, if y'all want to look at this, water pressure in Fayette County is just a trickle. You can find this out anywhere. It's not hidden. And the crazy thing is, I started looking into this, like, months ago, thinking, well, I'm glad I don't live there. Then, like, a week ago, I started hearing about a data center. I'm like, that's not right. I mean, it's just not. And people outside of the city of Cornelia, we don't get a vote on stuff, aren't we?

Mayor Borrow said let me throw that out to you right there. So, what you're saying is you don't want the county to be able to have money.

Sandy said exactly. What can be done? Guaranteed. Because what if y'all don't want it in Habersham, but whoever comes after y'all? We must have a guarantee.

Mayor Borrow said No, we totally understand that. So, our jurisdiction is solely, like us, and the people here tonight are solely in the city limits of Cornelia. So, if Demorest or the county or if Tallulah Falls says, we want one, then you go show up there and you state your case.

Sandy said because of people like you is why people don't like judges or lawyers. What did you say? The ship has already sailed. Why don't you go study or learn some more?

City Attorney said I did not say that. I said the ship; I thought that the relation to that ship transpired coming out of the Church of God I'm going through PRIMO, LLC and then later to the following. It's like that there's sales or value and that that's something which then they're the owner and then they come to us and asked to be annexed. I'm just saying that in terms of going back and fighting that fight to recapture that land or take back those deeds, that's a different, that's between the parties who feel like they are.

Sandy said I understand that, but you did talk down to everybody in this room. Yes, you did.

City Attorney said let me take it. I apologize. If you feel in any way I was talking down to you, I apologize 100%. I don't mean to be that way. I know that this is a different environment. I know it's not a place where we normally talk to each other in this type of way. But I promise you, you can ask anybody who's been around me for a long time. There's a lot of folks who know me. I am not a person who looks up or down at people. I don't do it. I am not from here originally, but I've lived here a really long time. All my wife's family are all from here. I know a lot of folks like that. I apologize. If I offended anyone, I sincerely apologize because I am not here to defend anyone. I'm listening to all y'all too. Like I said, I'm a citizen. I live here. I mean, I respect the fact that all y'all are here. And I may have said something that I shouldn't have said about, you know, like other people here tonight. I

think it is impressive how many people have got something to say about this. And that everybody's listening. I think it's important. And I do sincerely apologize to you.

Sandy said well, thank you for the apology. To me, it was obvious that there were a lot of people that were educated before they came here about the topics that they care about.

Thank you all very much. Thank you.

Thank you. Melissa from Alto. Melissa Hicks from Alto. I just have a quick question. Is it true that Cook has proposed to give the city of Cornelia land for a fire department, a park, green space, etc.? And if so, did you accept that? On the surface, that seems like a heck of a carrot to dangle in front of you.

Mayor Borrow said "I know there's been discussions of, hey, if we've got a lot of people down here and we've got housing and other things, do you need a public safety outpost, which would be half fire, half police? Maybe you can do this, maybe you can do that. And I think that would reflect their willingness to work, but I don't think anything official has been anything".

Melissa is that legal? Maybe a better question for the attorney. Is that legal? Or is that one of those things that might be legal but it just stinks? I hope you understand. Is it for the developer to offer the city of Cornelia property for a fire department, green space, etc. We're hearing story after story where the developer is pressuring landowners to sell, but they may be offering to give the city of Cornelia property.

City Attorney Campbell, I've certainly heard of an idea that there would be some kind of fire department or police department. It's probably down to the southern part of this, but they might do, but it's only in that stage. I haven't seen anything. There's no degree where there's no nothing in the right. People probably need to hear more about that. They certainly can offer to give property. Is it ethical?

Mayor Borrow said is it ethical or legal for them to offer that? I don't know if it's legal. Is it ethical? I don't know.

Brad Crane, Mount Airy, Georgia. Thank y'all. Merry Christmas. I know this is not the Christmas gift that y'all probably wanted, but I deal with elected officials on a daily basis with my job. The topic of conversation that comes up with everyone that I speak with is legacy. What do you want your legacy to be when you leave office? That's something you've got to consider. What do you want your legacy to be when you're gone from the commission? Same as being city attorney. What do you want your legacy to be? Being a State Court Judge or the city attorney? So there's just something to think about just a key word, legacy what do you want your legacy to be thank you.

I'm Emily Herrin, I know most of you and I've had great interactions with almost everybody or no interactions I don't live in Cornelia, but I do own a business and I'm not coming here tonight to accuse anybody of anything or to say anything egregious has happened, but I just want to think about what we want to be as a county and as a community. I know that we keep hearing the phrase that growth is inevitable, and I've worked with you guys. I know that the Inland Port is coming. I know that we're on an interstate. But growth does not have to be inevitable because of you. I know that that sounds like, you know, cotton candy and clouds, but you are the gatekeepers of our community. You get the vote. So, you guys, if you grew up here, if you didn't, if you grew up here, you got the privilege of growing up here. I grew up in Dawsonville. Somebody talked about it earlier. It was nothing like it is now. I believe that we are Americans and we deserve to have free enterprise. I don't hate on Cook for trying to make some money. I get it. I want to pay my bills. I want to save something for my kids. But I also know that where we live is a special place. And it's going to sound kind of cheesy to say, but if you turn on Hallmark right now, every single movie on there is about a small town being consumed by a developer. And again, I get it. You all want to make money. I know it's silly to say, but we have something special here. And we don't have to be beholden to the idea that growth is inevitable because you guys get that vote. I know that that sounds silly and that sounds like naive, but that's why we have people in elected offices, to represent the people who voted them in. Not, and I'm not hating on y'all because y'all are doing your job. I know that there's strategic plans. Great, do the strategic plans. I used to help you guys with that kind of stuff and stepped away to do something else. But you're not beholden to the strategic plan. You're beholden to your voters. Not a developer, not the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing, not GMA, not any of these letter agencies. but the people who live here. I moved here and I don't say that with animosity, guys. I don't, because I haven't been in your seats, but I want to do stuff that's awesome for our community, too. I'm raising my kids here. My husband grew up here. I grew up in Dawson County. You can't recognize it. My mom grew up in Forsyth County. You can't recognize it. It's cookie-cutter houses on top of each other, on top of each other, on top of each other. And we moved here as 21-year-old kids to raise our kids where they could be in a community that's small, that's not Gwinnett County, that's not even Hall County now. We don't have to be a cookie cutter on a map just because there's an interstate and just because there's an Inland Port. We have the ability, through you guys, to protect the integrity of our community, to give our kids what y'all have, a small town that we can grow up in. Yeah, let's bring business. Great. But hundreds and hundreds of doors, even over 8 to 10 years, it's a lot. It's a lot for the schools. It's a lot for the roads. I'm not going to go back over everything else. I just want to say, you turn on the radio, there's songs about where we live. We have an asset in our beauty, in our nature, in our farms, in our

property. It's an asset that the cats out of the bag, and the bulldozers have come, and the concrete is poured. You can't put the cat back in the bag. So, let's just try to think about what we have as an asset instead of a liability. And maybe think about protecting it a little bit better.

Mayor Borrow thanked her.

Good evening. My name is Dale Latty. It's the first time I've ever been before the commissioners in Cornelia, Mr. Mayor, commissioners. I did want to just recount a couple of things that I've observed over the last 30 years here in Habersham County. We moved here in 1995. And I think it was about three years later that Mark Reed and I were in the same class down there for the Chamber, Chamber of Commerce Leadership Habersham. The story that I wanted to relate tonight is one that is in defense of you, really. Also the city attorney and everybody else who feels this sense that somebody is pushing a train in the wrong direction, and it must be you. But what I can tell you is something that I think really this meeting here tonight might represent a turning point against. One of the classes we went down to in Atlanta was handled by the Department of Community Affairs. One of the lessons that we got at Leadership Habersham, now it may be different now, but I kind of doubt it because I recently saw an example of a hundred-year-old promotion of industry in the state of Georgia by Georgia Power Company. You may have seen that Georgia magazine from 1925 having listed all the wonderful attributes in Habersham County for industry, worldwide, people from anywhere to move here 100 years ago. But what we learned in 1998 is that there's a concept called maximum tax absorption ratio. Remember that. Maximum tax absorption ratio. What that theory states is that you tax the people until they squeal. Then you figure out a way to do it without letting them squeal. But really what's right behind all of it was electric meter hookups. More meters means more industry, means more revenue, means bigger company, Georgia Power, even EMC. Okay, what I'm defending you against is that you have been acculturated into a system that wants to destroy you. It wants to destroy your simple way of life. So be aware. Be aware that you don't have to do anything that the people in this room don't elect you to do or not to do. The county commissioners face the same situation. I think maybe we've got to a turning point. I hope we have because as Judge Campbell knows, we used to ride dirt bikes at 400. That route, what's the ridge road down there? About three miles north of 285. We grew up in the same neighborhood, and we've been moving northeast ever since to get away from it. And we don't, you don't, and should not allow it to happen, just because you've been herded in that direction by a maximum tax absorption ratio. Thank you.

I'm Texas Hudson and I've been in Habersham pretty much my whole school years. I know a few of y'all myself. I think everybody knows where everybody's going with all this. I'd like to hear from each one of y'all who y'all are, what y'all represent, and why, what y'all are in favor

of. Even Cook's side, I'd like to hear from everybody on their side of this. I think that can help everybody determine what y'all mean. Thank y'all.

Mayor Borrow said Yes, sir. And you will. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Hudson said I just want to hear each one of y'all's values and where you stand. All right, so I'll start. It's going to be very similar to how I started. John, I do appreciate everything you have done and everything you have said. But if you have been fluent in what you have and respected, I just want to hear from other people. You've done a very good job. I can say it yourself. I'd like to hear from everybody else as well.

Mayor Borrow, sure, totally, I'll just do a real quick summary. we're here because this is what we thought everybody asked for because we've been talking for five to ten years of the comprehensive plan this is what the county directs this is how we keep out of the county and keep it concentrated and that's how we've gotten here we had lots and lots and lots of people speak in favor of this stuff and right now listen to lots and lots and lots of people speaking against this stuff so here's the thing this isn't combative. I think a lot of you feel that this is combative because you're sitting there and I'm over here. This isn't combative. We're here to serve you. Like we are elected to serve you. Public servants. We totally are. And we may see eye to eye on some things. We may disagree on some things. But the whole combative thing, like, you're an idiot. You don't know what you're talking about. No, no, no. I'm not talking about you. No, I'm just talking about comments. I'm talking about comments. I'm just talking about the idea of how much we get the idea of So, Mark, why don't we go down with this?

Commissioner Reed said I think it's a great idea. I appreciate you all coming tonight. We've been trying to come up with something to fill this place up. He said I grew up here in Cornelia. I'm like except for being a baby and pretty involved. But I will tell you, you know, it's I don't owe Cook nothing. We have a system here where people who own one in, if they're out in the county, they can ask to annex property into the city. Why do they do that? So that they can have the services that the city provides. I believe in free market. I believe in competition. I believe in diversifying the tax base, which industry and commercial will help balance. Hey, we've been listening to you guys, and you all obviously are smarter than we are. Okay? You ask me what I think, okay? I think that I would rather, you know, 365 is what it is. I grew up, I remember when there was no 365. I remember when there was no Baldwin bypass. People come out, and I'm sure that wasn't popular at the time when they split farms and took property from people. We're not taking property from anybody. They're asking to join the city, okay? Now, when that happens, the city has responsibilities to make sure that the development of the property in the city, any property in the city, is done in a

lawful and orderly fashion. I was flipping through and some of y'all folks probably said, you know, whatever. I was searching the zoning ordinance to see what is so bad about highway business. You know, 365, do we want people just flying through Habersham County. You know, I mean, it's the rednecks from Atlanta trying to get to Cherokee, and it's the rednecks from North Carolina trying to get to Atlanta. You know, we talk about how dangerous 365 is, and it is. It's dangerous. However, the DOT looks at it by traffic count. The more traffic we have, chances are the improvements that we need will happen soon. Okay, I don't know. But that's kind of the counterintuitive idea that I have. You know, Duncan Bridge Road is a heck of an intersection. Lots of people are being killed there. It's terrible, but I've got to think that if the corner is developed in the Walmart kind of business type situation there, then improvements will be made and it will in fact be safer. I live downtown Cornelia, I love walking downtown that's just where I live, I don't live out in the country and I feel for you guys who live out in the country when growth comes to where you are, okay, I feel it, but how, and that's always question, how do we balance the rights of this person with the rights of this person? How do we balance them? I'm telling you, I'm for business, I'm for diversifying the tax base, I'm for free market, capitalism, and this stuff, it's not going to happen like this. You know, people think it's going to just suddenly happen. I guess the thing that's really hurt me the most listening to you guys, or some people, were the attitude that I've got mine, and I don't want y'all to get yours. I don't want; we might as well put a gate on every exit coming through Habersham County. That's what it seems like. I've only been on this board for four years. I've been going to meetings at the county level. At these meetings, what they say over and over and over again is, we don't want anything up north. We want the development to be in the south. We want to use that artery at 365. That's where the growth should be. That's where the growth should be. They've been saying that for years. Who? Well, nobody in this room wants it. Everybody wants it.

Mayor Borrow said we're going to vote here in a minute, you're going to hear what we have to say. Y'all listen here for a second. Nobody's trying to do anything shady. We're now at quarter to nine. I want to make sure that people who have shown up and want to have their voices heard have a chance. If y'all have something that you haven't heard yet, and we've got probably half a dozen buckets of school, traffic, our way of life, Maybe, I don't like how they're trying to buy the property. There's, this feels like too much too soon. If it's anything other than those buckets, we're all ears, but if it's still in that same bucket, then consider your point, well taken.

Hey sir, my name is Salvador Carrillo, and I've been living in Habersham County for 32 years. It's been a privilege to live in Habersham County, but also, I've been living in Cornelia for the past 28 years. I think the way I want to live is to contract somebody to build my home. I don't

want the Cook's way. I want especially somebody from Habersham County. I want for that money to stay in Habersham County. And that is my point. I'm kind of ignorant, but in this case, I'd rather go that way.

Mayor Borrow said I understand. First of all, you're not ignorant. There are some facts that are true and not true, and we're trying to help make sure everybody has the best information.

Mr. Carrillo, so all I ask for like, we can vote today, you know. It doesn't have to be. I also would like for the Hispanic community to come and vote on this, because I did read an article about it, but I didn't pay much attention. I was watching Facebook today, and that's the reason I'm here. Mayor Borrow thanked him for coming.

My name's Mitch Easley. I do have a different bucket to speak from. My wife and I are the directors of Freedom Hill Recovery Home for Women. We don't live in Cornelia, but a lot of the women that we help do. A lot of the families who have in the last year buried family members are from Cornelia in Habersham County. Things are getting worse it doesn't matter if you build a house or an apartment complex big business, small business things are getting worse if you want to expedite the problem getting here build low income housing alright \$200,000 I can't believe I'm saying this, but now \$200,000 houses are low income. There's talk about giving 50-year mortgages instead of 30. Now people can afford it, or you get billionaires, like you said, purchasing large tracts of land, building spec houses, renting them out, getting Section 8 money, subsidized housing, apartment complexes that get tax breaks. Five years later you're afraid to walk in the stairwell. I know that because I've been there. I've been there as a professional. I've been there as someone that was doing the best they possibly could to try to make it. And I've been there as somebody that was sleeping in that stairwell. Now, I'm telling you, if you want to welcome problems in, the people who are really happy about this development are not the people in this room. They're real estate developers, the builders, big business, they're pretty happy about it, but they can care less. They can build anywhere they want to. Drug dealers are ecstatic about this. You're bringing in a group of people, nothing against anyone. I couldn't do what I'd do for a living if I had prejudice based on income, tax pressure, whatever. Everybody makes more money, I promise you. So, if you bring a group of people in here who rely on the government for their food, they rely on the government for their rent, they rely on the government for their insurance, and on down the line, plenty of things they're not thinking about. Then what are we going to do when they've got that same amount of time on their hands? Whatever. We've got a community of people here that have elected you folks to represent them. Hear us. I mean, just listen to what we say. We're not being smart. We're not being sarcastic or smirking or anything like that. We're concerned. We're concerned for your kids. We're concerned for your grandkids. I went to four funerals this year. A couple

of years ago, I went to the funeral of my son's biological father because of the drugs that are making its way into Habersham County. And it's not Atlanta; it's not even Gainesville. See the weight of the drugs that they found in White County two weeks ago. You think it's not here? Thank you.

I'm Jonathan Mark. I live on Grand Ave., right near both you guys. So, I had trouble with the garbage pick-up, up that way, as we know. It's improved greatly, but I've come to understand that it may go to a two-day pickup instead of three. Is that correct? Where they only service the city two days a week versus three days?

City Manager Anderson said our garbage company is looking into how they can do that. They haven't said they're going to do that.

Mr. Mark asked about the property tax on the homes for the new proposed development?

City Manager Anderson, yes, I'm happy to answer. First, it's an ordinance that the city of Arcade has adopted for a development that they are doing, and we've been in touch with that city attorney to talk about how that works, and what that is, and how you can do that. Basically, it would be as if those property owners within this development only would ask to pay an additional millage rate on top of what every taxpayer in the city pays. That additional revenue would go into a fund that would reimburse the developer for the infrastructure that he puts in for that piece of property only. However, we have not adopted that ordinance, nor have we had a discussion with the City Commission about that ordinance. It has simply been part of a discussion between staff and the developer on how the infrastructure could be funded.

Mr. Mark asked, so would all of their tax dollars go strictly to the repaying of Cook Construction or would it be?

City Manager Anderson said No, just that additional three. The additional millage rate that the person who purchases the property agrees to pay will go into a fund that would be used to reimburse for the infrastructure. That is how it is done in the city of Arcade. But again, that has been a very preliminary discussion as a possible way to fund.

Mayor Borrow said I appreciate everybody being here so late. Upgrades to the water treatment plan. I've heard that mentioned. Is that necessary now or is this necessary upon or the contingency of this being developed? No, we're upgrading the wastewater.

Jeanette Byron once again. I heard Mr. Reed say that he didn't represent people who don't live in Cornelia. If this annexation goes through, you represent the whole county because you impact the whole county. This is not just one place. It's everybody in this room. That's why we're here. So, you are representing all of us. Because we're here. and what you do tonight impacts everybody in this room.

Mayor Borrow said all right. Thank you. I agree with you. And we don't live in a bubble. We understand our community. Again, we're listening to you.

My name is Jennifer Harris, Martha's my mom. Something that I thought of that she didn't ask is her land is that one acre that is in the center of everything else that would be annexed. What happens to her one acre? She's not asking to be annexed into Cornelia. Everything else will be and she will be an unincorporated island, which I think is against the state law, is it not?

Mayor Borrow, Right, I get what you're saying. That's a great question.

Ms. Harris said that's what we're afraid of. So, I mean, we don't know. That's what the eminent domain is about. No, it's not. Because she's not. You said that landowners or homeowners were asking to be annexed in, and she's not. But if her neighbors are and she's not, then how does that affect her?

Mayor Borrow said that's a great question. They're looking it up right now.

City Manager Anderson said the law does not allow the creation of uncooperated islands.

Ms. Harris said so if she wants to live the rest of her days out on that one acre, surrounded by everything else, they can't take it from her? That's correct. Can the city come in? This is our concern more than what's going to be built here. Where's my mom going to go?

Ms. Stuckey said I'm not against selling if I have to.

Mayor Borrow said we agree it's important that you're treated right. Never being treated with disrespect. We agree.

I'm Terry Roberts. I was going to piggyback on my solution. What about on those 21 acres that's already been annexed in, if we could do subdivision or two or three houses per acre instead of stacking them up? What about the empty buildings that we have in the city now. If we want to make our community better, why don't we do something with the empty buildings in the city instead of annexing and having stuff going on.

Mayor Borrow, we agree 100% but property owners are allowed to keep their property unoccupied if they like. They can rent it, they can sell it, they cannot sell it, but we agree it would be great to have a lot more stuff in Cornelia occupied.

Mayor Borrow, Anybody else? All right, folks. Anybody want to talk?

Keith Cook, Cook Communities. I have been a business owner here in Habersham County for over 20 years. We've done three developments here

in Habersham County. I'm going to go over this. I'm not going to take a firing squad behind me but what I would be happy to do is, if you've got a question, you can come up, put your name, phone number, email, and what your question is. I will contact you, and I will have a civil discussion with you over what your concern is. I applaud each of you, and I applaud City of Cornelia for issuing a statement over all the misinformation that has been put out there. You continue to hear misinformation. Just heard today that there was a website in Virginia, and we're in Virginia, and we're advertising on it. Totally untrue. It's totally untrue. I'm not advertising anywhere; we're not even advertising this project. What I will tell you, moving forward, the comp plan in Cornelia and Habersham County, what has been laid out from the citizens input that came through the comp plan, you can overlay our project and it will match that comp plan. That comprehensive plan goes completely with what we have proposed. We are bringing affordable housing, good shopping, and good jobs in this area. We want to move forward with our application and the way that it's submitted. What we have heard about and also cited in the DRI, the two biggest concerns is student burden on schools and the traffic concerns. Currently there are 18,774 residential units in Habersham County. Out of that, the school system reports 7,204 students. That is a ratio of 38.4 students for every hundred units of housing here in Habersham County. If you take, and I think there's a lot of misinformation for Level Grove and then what has actually been proposed and is trying to be annexed in, Level Grove has already been approved. What we're proposing and what this council is voting on today on the residential side is 113 proposed residential units. Okay? And that equals 40 new students coming into this county school. Alright? Again, again, again, 18,774 residential units and 7,204 students in Habersham County. Also, traffic, and the DRI was actually mentioned. We have met with GDOT. Okay and on GDOT we're continuing and we will continue to meet with them on this project and future projects. However, the newspaper has never mentioned Duncan Bridge and the flyover bridge and the ramps that are proposed and as we're meeting with them we're talking about how do we cooperate with the right-of-way acquisition where they wouldn't have to acquire it. We're going to be cooperative with GDOT. We're already putting turning lanes on Level Grove Road. And of course, we will comply with anything that GDOT's going to require off Duncan Bridge Road. So we are, this is, this project, let me move forward, we hear all the time, we own rental property here in Habersham County, and we hear all the time from mothers thanking us for providing quality housing for their son and grandkids and daughters-in-law that want to live in this county but can't afford Gwinnett County. They can't afford adjacent counties. So housing is a real issue and if you want your daughters and sons to move here, they've got to have affordable housing. Also, what has not been discussed is that we have and people were talking about water and sewer and is their capacity. Many people don't realize that the water sewer is actually going in an expansion and will be

completed in 2027 and we have been working with the city of Cornelia water and sewer department on providing service for them to provide services and they do have capacity for this project. This project is not going to be built overnight. It will take literally two years to engineer this project and go through the approval process. Also, from there it will take a 10-year build out to get this project on the ground. So, this is going to improve the infrastructure for the City of Cornelia. It's going to create a tax base where it's not heavily relied on the citizens and the residential units. It's going to have increased tax base in industrial and retail properties. We hear from citizens, "I'd love to have a Publix close to me. I'd love to have a Kroger where I don't have to drive to Gainesville. We'd love to put them here and that's what we're trying to do. With that taking place, we are again providing quality housing, jobs, and industry here for people. And again, I'm not here to take questions, but what I will do, if you will write your name, number, email, and what your question is, I will contact you directly, and I will have a civil conversation with you about any of your concerns. Thank you, and I applaud each of you guys for your civic duty in doing your job here in coordinating.

I'm Donna McCurry, and I live in the city of Cornelia. One thing I want to commend you on is your Christmas decorations. You guys do Christmas right. You get everything here right for Christmas. And you know what? That makes me happy as a homeowner. I love taking my grandbaby to that park. And I love showing her the Christmas trees. Everything. And I see a lot of things that are being done right here. And I like the little 5,000 seat amphitheater. That's wonderful. Thank you very much. That's taxpayer money being put to good use to build our property values. I think it builds our property values. And I pay \$4,000 a year in homeowner taxes, so I've got a good say right here in what needs to be said. Growth is needed. We have empty buildings in Cornelia, which is an eyesore. We need business here. I appreciate this guy, I don't know where he's at, wanting to bring in some new homes. I've been in the real estate business. I've been a lender. I know what's going on in that field. If people cannot get a loan, I'm talking about, I'm here for the younger generation. I'm old and I'm retired. I'm here for the younger generation. They need a place to buy a house that they can afford. Now, Cornelia, you know, everybody's worried about this sewage and this water. What did they do before housing was here? Think about that. Every time there's new subdivisions, you have to make an accountability for that, right? Now these new homes are going to pay taxes in our city. We are not going to pay it. What these new homes are going to do is they're going to keep our taxes low. You've got to understand that. Laugh at it. Laugh at it. Because the more people you have in a town, the more resources. We need new schools. We need new teachers. Our schools are horrible here. I'm going to say that because it's my time. I'm a \$4,000 taxpayer. We need better resources. We need better schools. I will say that we're not very good with our schools. I'd like to see these test scores go up. I'd like

to see more attention brought to our children here. And you know, I'm for all the young people in this room. I'm old, like I said. I got maybe 10, 15 years left on me. Hopefully more.

Mayor Borrow closed the Public Forum

Old Business

Annexation Request and Zoning for Cook Construction & Real Estate

This is a request by Cook Construction & Real Estate to annex approximately 216.6 acres of land located along Highway 365 South between Level Grove Road and Duncan Bridge Road. The applicant is seeking multiple zoning designations including a PUD (25.6 acres) with residential lot sizes of 3,700 square feet, Agriculture (59.9 acres), and Highway Business (131.2 acres) with Conditions. The Conditions will allow some for some industrial uses. We held a public hearing on this request on November 4, 2025. The request is to construct 113 single family homes on 25.6 acres. The remaining 191 acres will be for commercial and industrial use. Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the resolution; no second motion was made so it died from a lack of a motion.

Development Assistance Real Property Interest Acquisition Ordinance

This ordinance sets requirements before the City considers securing property interests for an approved development by eminent domain. This ordinance has been posted since the October Commission Meeting, and we have received some opposition to it. The opposition stems from people feeling that we will use this ordinance to use our eminent domain powers to take someone's property to give to a private developer for them to profit from. Georgia law does not allow this. The law requires that eminent domain can only be used for public use such as roads, infrastructure, government buildings, public parks, etc. Commissioner Reed made a motion to not approve the ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Public Hearings

Request for Preliminary Plat Approval for Magnolia Townhomes

Mayor Borrow opened the public hearing and asked the City Manager to summarize the request. This is a request to approve the preliminary plat for the construction of 34 single family attached townhomes. The property is located on West Airport Road and has a zoning designation of R-2. The proposed plan meets all the requirements of our Zoning Ordinance and Minimum Development Standards. The allowed density in R-2 is 12 units per acre so per our ordinance the developer could construct 50 units but only requested 34. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on this request on November 20, 2025. Following this hearing they voted to recommend approval of the request.

Mayor Borrow asked if there was anyone there to speak on this matter. Mayor Borrow closed the public hearing. Commissioner Bagwell made a motion to approve the request for the preliminary plat approval for Magnolia Townhomes, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

New Business

Vibrant Communities Grant Project Update - Audrey Davenport said she can relate to how eminent domain adversely affects black communities across this country. I-16 demolished a black community in Savannah, and so forth and so on. So eminent domain is something close to my heart. I live in downtown, most of the time, eminent domains that wipe out black communities are downtown areas, even in a small town like where I live. So, I get nervous when they talk about eminent domain because it affects me differently than it does someone who lives out in the county. I just want them to know that. I wish I had a group of people like this who were standing behind me when I started to talk about what I'm worried about happening in my little black community, okay? So now, to that end, let me say this to you. There is nothing permanent except change, okay? That is part of why I named this project Brush Strokes of Change, right? So, what I want to say is thank you for giving me a moment to share an update of this project. It is a mural project, and this project continues to grow in ways that honor our historically black community's legacy, its people, and its future. Today happens to be a personal milestone for me. Last year on this day, my sister, Doris Davenport, transitioned from this life. She inspired this project, her love for our community and neighborhood, her belief in our stories and her constant reminder that our history deserves to be heard through her poetry through the legacy collection of the Regional African American Museum of Northeast Georgia and the encouragement from our city manager Donald Anderson. Brushstrokes of Change's mural project combines a collective vision and is designed to engage the community through a series of gatherings and workshops. The first gathering will be Thursday, December 4th at 5:30 here at City Hall, right? And it will be live streamed, right? Okay. A comprehensive schedule will be promoted on Facebook and in the city's weekly newsletter. I'm grateful for the opportunity to carry this work forward and I appreciate your continued support as we bring this mural and this vision to life. Do you have any questions?

Commission Meeting Dates for 2026

These are the proposed dates for the City Commission Meetings for 2026. The city manager stated that he will be out of town on the first Tuesday in April, so he requested the April meeting be moved to the second Tuesday. Other than this the first Tuesday of each month does not conflict with any holidays. Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the Commission Dates for 2026, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Appointment to the Downtown Development Authority

Alex Micehelle has resigned from the Downtown Development Authority. Per the DDA Bylaws she has nominated Hayden Black to fill her seat. Mr. Black is a small business owner and a resident of Cornelia. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve Hayden Black to the DDA, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Resolution Approving the Habersham County Local Emergency Plan

Habersham County has updated the county wide Local Emergency Operating Plan and has requested that all the cities approve it. The city manager recommended that this resolution be. Commissioner Bagwell made a motion to adopt the Habersham local Emergency Plan, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 - 0

Engineer's Recommendation for Ward 1 Infrastructure Project

The city manager reported that we received 7 bids for the Ward 1 Infrastructure Project ranging from \$2,230,580 to \$3,851,069. The budget for this project is \$1,500,000 so staff worked with Carter & Sloope to reduce the scope of the project to get as close to the budget as possible. We have been able to reduce the scope to \$1,700,000. Carter & Sloope has reviewed the bids and communicated the changes with the low bidder, Civil Construction & Utilities, LLC. Based on their review they are recommending that you award the project to Civil Construction & utilities, LLC. in the amount of \$1,700,000. Based on our contract with Carter & Sloope for this project their remaining fees for the project will be \$327,700 so the total cost of the project will be \$2,027,700. To fund the project, you will need to increase line item 505-4100-54-1400 in the 2026 budget \$527,700. Commissioner Reed made a motion to award the project to Civil Construction & Utilities, LLC. and to increase line item 505-4100-54-1400 in the 2026 by \$527,700 in 2026, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Engineer's Recommendation for Lead & Copper Water Line Project

The city manager reported that we received 4 bids for the Lead and Copper Water Line Field Inventory Project. The low bidder is from Mack Jones Enterprises in the amount of \$200,250. Carter & Sloope has reviewed the bids and has recommended that you award the project to Mack Jones Enterprises. The total cost of the project will be \$308,284 with engineering fees. We have a GEFA Grant in the amount of \$262,211.75 so we will need to use \$46,072.25 from reserve Water Revenues. This project is not funded in the 2026 Budget so you will need to increase line item 505-4100-541400 by \$308,284 to fund the project. Commissioner Bagwell made a motion to award the project to Mack Jones and amend the 2026 budget to increase line item 505-4100-54-1400 by \$308,284, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 -0

Budget Adjustment

The city manager reported that we have collected more Hotel-Motel Tax Revenue than we projected for 2025, so we need to amend the 2025 Budget to account for this increase. We need to decrease revenue line item 275-0000-314105 by \$60,000. We need to increase revenue line item 275-0000-314110 by \$170,000. We need to increase the following expenditure line items: 275-1100-572000 - \$40,000, 275-1100-611000 - \$45,000, 275-1100-541437 - \$13,000, 275- 1100-542320 - \$12,000. Commissioner Reed made a motion to adjust the 2025 budget to account for more hotel-motel tax revenue than was projected, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Appointment to the Library Board

The city manager reported that we currently have one opening on the Habersham County Library Board. We have received an application from Susie Medina who lives at 533 Wood Street to serve on the Board. Commissioner Bagwell made a motion to appoint Susie Medina to the Library Board, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

Commissioner Reed made a motion to adjourn at 9:59, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

John Borrow, Mayor