

CITY OF CORNELIA
MINUTES OF MEETING
MAY 5, 2026

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

Also in attendance were Marisol Cauthen, Audrey Davenport, JL Brawner, Blaine Wadsen and his wife.

Mayor Borrow opened the meeting and said we had a change to the agenda. City Manager Anderson explained that there was an issue with Carter & Sloopes website where you place bids. The bids for the Amphitheater Project were received on Friday, and they reviewed the four bids have recommended, Charles Black Construction for the project. The Commission reviewed the remaining items on the Agenda. City Manager Anderson said that Level Grove Cemetery was discussed at the Planning Retreat and since the cemetery is not maintained by a church it is hard to get donations. Mr. Anderson said that we always give the Depot Association a \$3000 donation, but now that the city has taken ownership of the Depot he is proposing to give the donation to Level Grove Cemetery. Commissioner Reed thanked Mr. Anderson for the updates on the project in his ward. Mayor Borrow said that Marisol Cauthen was here to speak about Short Term Rentals. Ms. Cauthen said that she is proposing a 12-month Pilot Program with strict limits and enforcement. She said that it would include a 3-strike enforcement, 1st a noise complaint, 2nd is a party complaint and after you reach 3 strikes, you are out. Commissioner Reed said that what he's hearing from his ward that they don't want it and neither does he. Commissioner Griggs said that a rental house is a business for the homeowner, she said I am just trying to make sense of it. Commissioner Griggs said that I am not saying I am for it or against it. Commissioner Cook asked if that was located anywhere in the City or just in a certain area. Mayor Borrow said if you decide to move forward with this it can be structured anyway you want to, but nothing will be decided tonight. They discussed it at length. Audrey Davenport interjected and said she would like to table the discussion so that she can speak. Ms. Davenport said that when it comes to her neighborhood it doesn't get the same kind of attention that the other ones get. She also stated that when she asks questions, she gets only a flat-line answer and is never thanked for what she does. I want to make it clear that I'm here for my Historically Black Neighborhood. Ms. Davenport said that Jim Smith was a black man and that matters to her neighborhood, but there is nothing on the plaque that states why it is named Jim Smith Park. She said that she would like to see Jim Smith Park get some of the same attention

that Donald Anderson Park gets. Ms. Davenport stated that Mr. Brawner had brought some things to her attention about Jim Smith Park. Mr. Brawner said that when the mothers take the kids to the play at the park there are no benches for them to sit on. Commissioner Cook said that all the parks are under review, Mr. Brawner asked what is taking so long. Commissioner Cook stated again they are under review. Ms. Davenport said that they would like to have some things completed by the dedication of the new Mural on July 11th. She said she would like to see benches, a nice Light Post, and some sprucing up before the event. She also asked about the sidewalk, and extending the Historic District. City Manager Anderson said that is not something we can do on our own, he said that we are trying to get the HPC board seats filled. He said that a study has to be done of the neighborhood to find out if enough of the homes meet the criteria set by the Federal Guidelines. Ms. Cauthen said she would donate \$2,000. toward benches. Ms. Davenport thanked her for her generosity. Ms. Cauthen said she grew up in that ward before she was adopted, so it has a special place in my heart. Ms. Davenport asked her if she would donate another \$1,000 to the Hill-festival they are planning. Ms. Cauthen said she would be happy to. Mayor Borrow recapped what she wanted to see before the Mural dedication and apologized to her if he had not made it clear that he appreciated the work she had done. He said I feel I have done my best to let you know that. Ms. Davenport said it is not a feeling it is a fact.

The meeting adjourned at 5.58 PM

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

John Borrow, Mayor

CITY OF CORNELIA
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May 5, 2026

The Cornelia City Commission met in Regular Session on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 6:00 PM in the Commission Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor John Borrow called the meeting to order, and the following Commissioners were present: Mark Reed, Tony Cook, and Janice Griggs. Don Bagwell was absent. Also present: City Attorney Steve Campbell, City Manager Donald Anderson, and City Clerk Debbie Turner.

Commissioner Reed gave the invocation, and Commissioner Cook led the Pledge of Allegiance. Approved 3 - 0

Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 3 - 0

Commissioner Cook made the motion to approve the April 14th minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 3 - 0

City Managers Report

The planning for the Big Red Apple Centennial Celebration is coming together. The DDA has a full day planned which includes a car show, a fun run, a golf cart parade, an apple pie baking competition, live music, the release of the documentary about the apple, a re-dedication of the Big Red Apple, and culminating with a fireworks show at 9:00 PM. The event will take place on June 6th at the new park.

The contractor for the Ward 1 Infrastructure Project has installed 1,143 linear feet of new water main and 492 linear feet of new sewer main.

The EPD has implemented a Level 1 drought which does not mandate water restrictions but encourages water conservation. We have distributed educational materials about water conservation on the water bills, the weekly newsletter, and on the website.

With the assistance of Ms. Davenport, we have applied for a grant called the Red Clay Creative Cohort. This is a program under the Georgia Council for the Arts to provide training and assistance with implementing public art and creative placemaking projects. This is a very competitive grant as only 5 grants will be awarded. We should know if we are selected this week.

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We held the pre-construction conference with Georgia Paving for the 2026 Paving Project. They plan to begin working on Rosa Parks this week before moving on to the rest of the project. The project will re-surface Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King/Tutt Road, and Tower Avenue. They will also make some repairs on Front Street, Wyly Street, and on the walking trail at City Park. The project will also construct a new sidewalk on Second Street to connect Elrod Street to Martin Luther King.

Public Forum

Peter Madruga came forward to state that we are 30 days away from the 100-year, Bicentennial celebration of the Big Red Apple. He thanked Mayor Borrow, for taking the time to record a welcome message for the Documentary. Mr. Madruga asked if the time of the unveiling at 7 PM could be added to the advertising? City Manager Anderson said he would get that time added to them.

Hope Murray passed out a picture of the block she lives on. She said there are 23 homes, 8 are long-term rentals, 1 is empty, and the Short Home is the proposed short-term rental. Mrs. Murray said that the long-term renters are committed to the neighborhood and treat the homes like they own them. Mrs. Murray said that her family has been in that neighborhood for 60 years, and these are single-family residences. She said that with a short-term rentals you create high turnover and it competes with what the neighborhood stands for. Mrs. Murray asked that "you do not turn her community into something it was never meant to be". Mayor Borrow thanked her.

Sonja Crawford, Highland Ave. Ms. Crawford said she has lived there for 40 years and that each street is linked to a community. Ms. Crawford said when Hurricane Irma came through every neighbor helped one another out. She said there are no Airbnb's in Cornelia at all, several in Demorest that mainly house Piedmont College students. There is one in Clarkesville, and there are 520 from White County down to Lake Hartwell, but all of these have recreation activities. She said these places have hiking, fishing, and water sports you can do, but she said make no mistake they are not in a subdivision or a community. Ms. Crawford asked that "you consider this seriously". Mayor Borrow thanked her for coming and said there is no vote on this, it is just getting Public Feedback.

Gay Davis, Sunrise Circle. Ms. Davis said she has lived in her home for 33 years. She said I would like to tell you a story about a short-term rental that I was apart of. The rental was in Clarkesville, it had a small view of the lake

and we rented it to a family from Atlanta. At midnight, I received a call from a lady who was very upset. One of the gentlemen that was staying there had a birthday, had too much alcohol, and he got a gun for his birthday. He went to the back deck and shot the gun over the lake. From that night forward it was shut down. Ms. Davis said I implore you to vote no. Mayor Borrow thanked her and reiterated that will be no vote, we're just getting feedback.

A young lady came forward with her mother, who is legally blind. She said that she is her mother's caregiver, but she still enjoys walking in the Park. She is requesting a pedestrian signal at Chenocetah Drive and Wylly Street for her mother to be able to cross the road safely. Mayor Borrow thanked her for coming and said they would investigate it.

Audrey Davenport got up to come to the podium and stated no one claps for me when I speak. They made sure to applaud her. Ms. Davenport said that she was at the work session tonight and discussed some things she would like to see at Jim Smith Park before the Mural dedication on July 11th at 4PM. In the interest of being transparent she would like everyone to know that she has requested that the verbiage on the plaque be updated to show why the Park was named after Jim Smith. She would also like benches, a nice lamp post, and have the Park spruced up before the event. Ms. Davenport would also like to see the historic District extended. Mayor Borrow thanked her for coming. The crowd applauded her again.

Marisol Cauthen came forward with a proposal for a 12 Month Short-Term Rental Pilot Program; she said that she is a business owner and a homeowner. Ms. Cauthen said that after the last meeting, she took the time to gather feedback from business owners downtown, and they are all for it. They also understand that if the city decides not to move forward, they are okay with that as well. She said that after she was informed that short-term rentals weren't allowed in the city it was shut down. Ms. Cauthen gave the criteria that the pilot program would have with strict guidelines, local homeowners, and local property management. Mayor Borrow thanked her for coming.

Evelyn McClain came forward to say that it seems people don't care for or maintain their property anymore. She said she was very saddened to see some of the properties in her neighborhood, there is a lot of trash and debris in the yards. She asked if there is a way to report that? City Manager Anderson said that if you go to our website there is a link to report a problem. Ms. McClain said that she would like to start sending the agenda out to the Friends of Tower Mountain website, and that would keep them from having to come into the

office, they could just send an email directly. City Manager Anderson said he would get her added to the list of people that the agenda goes to.

Old Business

Ordinance # 04-26-01, amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

This is an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to create policies and procedures for the annexation of property into the city. Following the public hearing on April 14, 2026, the commission voted unanimously to post this ordinance for public comment. To date we have not received any comments regarding this ordinance. The city manager recommended approval of this amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the amendment, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 3 - 0

Public Hearings - None

New Business

Donation to the Level Grove Cemetery Committee

The Level Grove Cemetery is unique in that it is not owned by an entity that maintains it, so the maintenance is performed by a volunteer committee which relies on donations. This was discussed in detail at the Planning Retreat earlier this year. At that time, it was decided that the city could begin helping with this cost in the form of an annual donation. Each year the city budgets \$3,000 to assist the Depot Association with the cost of maintaining the Depot and the Railroad artifacts. Now that the city owns the Depot and the artifacts, the city manager has recommended that this \$3,000 be given to the Level Grove Cemetery Committee to assist with the cost of maintaining the cemetery. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the donation of \$3,000 to the Level Grove Cemetery every year, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 3 - 0

Resolution to Terminate Moratorium on Annexations

Now that the Zoning ordinance has been updated to implement procedures regarding annexation requests and Carter & Sloope has completed the Water and Sewer Capacity study the moratorium can be terminated. This resolution will terminate the temporary moratorium that was put in place on December 9, 2025. Commissioner Reed made a motion to terminate the Moratorium on Annexations, seconded by

Commissioner Cook. Approved 3 - 0

Resolution to Accept Phase II of the Infrastructure Improvements for Orchard Reserve Subdivision

Cook Residential, LLC. has completed Phase II of the Orchard Reserve Subdivision. The infrastructure was installed to our specifications and has been inspected. Furthermore the 12-month warranty period has expired. Commissioner Griggs made a motion to accept the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 3 - 0

Rental Fees for the new Park

Commissioner Reed made a motion to table the item as more information is needed, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 3 -

Recommendation for Amphitheater Contractor

We received 4 bids for the Amphitheater Project ranging from \$2,779,431 to \$3,473,230. Carter & Sloope has reviewed the bids and verified with the low bidder that their bid is accurate and valid. Based on this they are recommending that you award the project to Charles Black Construction for \$2,779,431. Commissioner Reed made a motion to award Charles Black Construction the project, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 3 - 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

John Borrow, Mayor