

CITY OF CORNELIA  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
APRIL 14, 2026

The Cornelia City Commission met in a Workshop Session on Tuesday, April 14, 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, Don Bagwell, Tony Cook, and Janice Griggs. Also present: City Attorney Steve Campbell, City Manager Donald Anderson, and City Clerk Debbie Turner.

Also in attendance were Blaine Wadsen and his wife. Buck Sydner and Ken Morris from the Cornelia Depot Association.

Mayor Borrow opened the meeting and announced that there is one change to the agenda. City Manager Anderson said that we need to add a proposal from Trailwave to run a Fiber line to the water plant from the High School. He explained that after doing research this is a much cheaper option than running the line from the Iron Ore lift station and will provide the water plant a redundant internet connection.

Mayor Borrow went over the Public Hearing on short-term rentals he said this is only to get input from citizens. Mr. Wadsen said that he can see both sides of it. He said it would be nice if your just visiting for a couple of days to be able to stay in a home rather than a hotel.

City Attorney Steve Campbell said he thinks it is a horrible idea. He said I want to know who is staying in the house beside me and that his neighbors also don't want this. Commissioner Griggs said she didn't see a problem with the idea as long as restrictions were put in place.

They also discussed the Zoning Ordinance amendment to Annexation Procedures. Mr. Anderson said that after the last annexation request, we found that our existing ordinance and procedures were not adequate. This ordinance provides clear rules and guidelines that will have to be followed before an application is processed.

Mr. Buck Sydner and Ken Morris from the Cornelia Depot Association was there to explain why the Depot Association needs to give the Depot to the City. Mr. Snyder said that his wife is ill and he can't give the proper time that is needed anymore. He explained that the Depot was slated to be torn down by the railway, and he went to the then City Manager Howard Whatley, and it was saved. He said he has been doing this for 39 years with Mr. Morris' help and hopes that the City will cherish it as much as he did. He asked that it be kept a Museum and that the artifacts be kept forever. Mayor Borrow thanked him for

all the work he has done. Mayor Borrow said that he has made the Depot a tourist Destination.

They went over the remaining items on the agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM

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Debbie Turner, City Clerk

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John Borrow, Mayor

CITY OF CORNELIA  
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APRIL 14, 2026

The Cornelia City Commission met in Regular Session on Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 6:00 PM in the Commission Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor John Borrow called the meeting to order, and the following Commissioners were present: Mark Reed, Don Bagwell, Tony Cook, and Janice Griggs. Also present: City Attorney Steve Campbell, City Manager Donald Anderson, and City Clerk Debbie Turner.

Commissioner Reed gave the invocation, and Mayor Borrow led the Pledge of Allegiance. Approved 4 - 0

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

Commissioner Bagwell made the motion to approve the February 21<sup>st</sup> Planning Retreat minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Commissioner Reed made the motion to approve the March 3<sup>rd</sup> minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

City Managers Report - We held our kickoff meeting with the consultants that will be working on the feasibility study for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Project. They are going to look at a couple of options, a bridge and a tunnel. There are pros and cons to both, the tunnel will cost a little more to construct but the bridge will have larger maintenance costs. The dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony for the new park has been scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 AM. Even though there have already been a couple of events at the park this will be the official grand opening. Phase 2, which is the construction of the amphitheater is out for bid, we should be able to award this project at the May Commission meeting so construction will be able to begin in early June. We were made aware that the date for the Big Red Apple Festival conflicted with the Chattahoochee Mountain Fair. In order to make sure that both events are successful we agreed to change the date of the festival. The new date will be September 26<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 15 students from UGA will be in town on May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> completing a study of our existing housing conditions. They will be working in every residential neighborhood in the city. We will put a notice on the water bill and in our weekly newsletter to that the residents will be aware of this so they will know that the students are working for the city when they see them walking around their neighborhood. A copy of this report is made an integral part of the minutes.

Public Forum -

Peter Madruga came forward to present a one-minute trailer of the Habersham History Big Red Apple documentary. He showed some pictures of the unveiling of the BRA on June 4, 1926, and some of the people who were in attendance. He also showed some people who spoke at the unveiling, and how he wanted to honor them. He also asked the Mayor if he could give a welcome message. Mayor Borrow said he would be glad to do that, and he thanked Mr. Madruga for his work on the documentary.

Audrey Davenport thanked the Mayor and Commissioners for sponsoring her in representing the City at the Planning Association Conference. Ms. Davenport stated that there were about 100 people in attendance, and Cornelia got a lot of visibility from what she shared about the city. She said there was a lot of good feedback, and she thanked them again for allowing her the opportunity. Mayor Borrow thanked her for representing the City and for sharing her experience.

Old Business - None

Public Hearings

Public Hearing on Short-Term Vacation Rentals

The city manager explained that the purpose of this hearing is to gauge public interest about the possibility of allowing short-term vacation rentals in the city. He stated that in Georgia, a short-term vacation rental (STVR) is generally defined as the rental of a residential dwelling unit to transient guests for less than 30 or 31 consecutive days in exchange for compensation. These rentals, often booked via platforms like Airbnb or Vrbo, are regulated locally through city or county ordinances that require permits, safety checks, and tax collection. They are required to obtain a business license and collect hotel-motel taxes. If you do decide to move forward with this it would require an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance so you would need to authorize me and Steve to begin this process.

Marisol Cauthen came forward to speak in favor of Short-Term Rentals. She said that she would like to follow in her Grandfather's legacy in investing in the community. Ms. Cauthen said that there should be strict regulations on them but that the impact on the city could be measurable. She asked the Mayor and Commissioners to consider a Pilot Program in a small area for up to a year to

see what impact it would have on the neighborhoods. She said she would like to see smart regulations such as occupancy limits and local management requirements. She said she is invested in the community and making it better. Mayor Borrow thanked her for coming.

Becky Stevens-Grobbelaar spoke in favor of Short-Term Rentals. She said that she has over 20 years of experience in Short-Term Rentals and that we don't have a lot of options for short-term rentals in the city other than the hotels. She spoke about the strict regulations as well, saying they need to be addressed because the rentals will be in residential neighborhoods. Commissioner Bagwell commended her for thinking about the regulations because he does think that that is a concern for people who have single family homes and what that small business would look like in a neighborhood. Mayor Borrow thanked her for coming.

#### Public Hearing on Ordinance # 04-26-01

The city manager explained that this is an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to create policies and procedures for the annexation of property into the city. The Unified Planning Board held a Public Hearing on this amendment on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Following this hearing they voted unanimously to recommend approval of the ordinance. The city manager recommended that this ordinance be posted for public comment. Commissioner Bagwell made a motion to post the Ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

#### New Business

#### Resolution # 04-26-01

The city manager explained that this is a resolution to rename the portion of Chattahoochee Street between Main Street and Clarkesville Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Currently there are 3 addresses located on this portion of this street. All 3 of these addresses have been contacted regarding the change and to date we have not received any objection to this request. The city manager recommended that the resolution be approved. Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

#### Resolution # 04-26-02

Mayor Borrow thanked Mr. Sydner for their dedication to saving the Depot from being torn down and all he has done for the past 39 years to make the Depot a

Tourist Destination. Mayor Borrow also thanked Mr. Morris for all he has done.

The city manager explained that this is a resolution to accept the donation of the Depot Railroad Museum's collection of property which includes all the artifacts as well as the Depot building. The Cornelia Depot Association was created in 1990 to preserve the history of the railroad in the city, and they have done a phenomenal job. They have raised tens of thousands of dollars that have been used to renovate and maintain the Depot building, the cabooses, and the artifacts. Their collection of railroad artifacts is amazing; the Depot Train Museum is a catalyst for drawing visitors to Downtown. By accepting this donation, the city agrees to hold the railroad museum collection in trust for the citizens of Cornelia and preserve and maintain these items in perpetuity. The city also agrees to continue to operate the Depot as a museum dedicated to the exhibition and preservation of the railroad museum collection in perpetuity. The city manager recommended that this resolution accepting the donation from the Cornelia Depot Association be approved. Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Budget Adjustment to Cover the Cost of the Big Red Apple Centennial Celebration

June 4<sup>th</sup> marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unveiling of the Big Red Apple Monument in Downtown Cornelia. The Downtown Development Authority and the Cornelia Hospitality & Tourism Board are working together to put on a festival to celebrate this event. They are planning a festival to take place on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> at the new park. The details are still being worked out between the 2 entities but they need financial assistance to cover the cost. The city manager requested an amendment to the FY 26 Budget to allocate \$25,000 to help fund this event. We are on pace to collect \$65,000 in Franchise Fees more than we projected. This request is to increase the Franchise Fee revenue line item by \$25,000 and to increase the City Manager's Special Projects line item by \$25,000 to help fund this event. Commissioner Bagwell made a motion for the budget adjustment of \$25,000 to increase the City Manager's Special Projects line item, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Approval of the Comprehensive Master Plan for City Parks

The city manager stated that SPG has submitted a draft of the Comprehensive Master Plan for our existing city parks for your consideration. This plan was created through a series of meetings between the city leaders and SPG. It

outlines a long-term plan for upgrades at our existing parks as well as improving the pedestrian connectivity between our parks. We allocated \$400,000 of our SPLOST funds towards these improvements. This will not cover all the upgrades so we will use this plan to pursue grant funds to assist with the project as well. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the Comprehensive Master Plan for City Parks, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 - 0

Proposal from Trailwave for Fiber Connection to the Water Plant

The city manager explained that Trailwave has provided us with a quote to run a redundant fiber line to the Water Plant. The construction cost will be \$7,600 and the monthly user cost will be \$217.11. This line will not only provide a redundant internet connection to the water plant, but it will allow us to install Scada at the sewer lift station at the high school. Commissioner Reed made a motion to approve the proposal from Trailwave, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM

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Debbie Turner, City Clerk

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John Borrow, Mayor