

BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS  
WORK SESSION  
FEBRUARY 11, 2026 5:45 P.M.  
CITY HALL 21 N. AVONDALE PLAZA

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor  
Graham Reiney, Mayor Pro Tem  
Michael Smith, Commissioner  
Luis Suazo, Commissioner  
Lyda Steadman, Commissioner

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager  
Shannon Powell, Assistant City Manager  
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney  
Karina Reyna, City Clerk  
Harry Hess, Chief of Police  
Jerry Branch, Deputy Chief of Police  
Marcel Jackson, Director of Public Works, Parks and Sanitation  
Ellen Powell, Creative, Marketing & Communications Director  
Adriana Holt, Senior Marketing and Communications Coordinator  
Isabella Salazar, Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Luis Suazo motioned to amend the meeting agenda to remove Item 4. Appropriation of Donation to City's General Fund. Commissioner Lyda Steadman seconded the motion. The motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Commissioner Michael Smith motioned to adopt the meeting agenda as amended. Commissioner Lyda Steadman seconded the motion. The motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Continued review of the Public Meeting Process

The Board continued their discussion over the public meeting process. Commissioners thoroughly examined ways to improve transparency, resident engagement, and internal deliberation while maintaining an orderly and equitable system for public comment. The Board agreed on the importance of open access and transparency and reviewed several suggestions including holding public comment after commissioner remarks, encouraging residents to speak at the podium with microphones for the benefit of virtual attendees, and establishing a time limit for comments to ensure equity and fairness. Commissioners noted that limiting repeated or reactive comments helps prevent undue stress on board members and avoids turning public input into a debate or a "gotcha" session.

Discussion also addressed meeting structure and scheduling. Commissioners reflected on past formats with separate meetings spaced approximately two weeks apart, which allowed for more in-depth discussion and public observation of deliberations. They

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debated whether combining meetings increased efficiency or unintentionally reduced opportunities for meaningful dialogue. Several commissioners agreed that stacked meetings (two meetings in one evening) can work if structured properly and that the current approach does not inherently limit public participation, as residents now have multiple opportunities per month to engage. Commissioners discussed the current meeting schedule and structure, noting that stacking the work session immediately after the regular meeting provides continuity but extends the overall meeting time. Mayor Jonathan Elmore stated that the current format allows multiple public comment opportunities. They are allowed before agenda items are voted on, after the regular meeting, during work sessions, and via statements or petitions. This allows three to four distinct opportunities for residents to provide input. The regular schedule of every other Wednesday was seen as familiar and predictable for the public, making it easier for residents to plan attendance. Several commissioners expressed support for maintaining the consolidated format, citing personal scheduling constraints and the benefit of having a two-week window between meetings to review questions, clarify issues, and prepare for discussion. There was a consensus that written public comments at the end of work sessions, such as via comment cards or emails, are often more effective than verbal comments for commissioners to process and respond thoughtfully, especially at the end of a long meeting.

The conversation also highlighted the difference in purpose between regular meetings and work sessions. Commissioners noted that combining them can make work sessions feel like formal meetings, whereas a dedicated work session by moving to the table allows for more in-depth discussion without the pressure of immediate decision-making. Structured limits on verbal comments were viewed as reasonable, but there was agreement that no arbitrary cap should restrict the total number of public speakers.

Commissioners also reviewed the processes at nearby jurisdictions, including DeKalb County and the City of Decatur, where public comment is allowed on agenda action items and additional petitions or statements, followed by commissioner responses. Commissioners emphasized that while citizens may ask questions outside agenda items, such inquiries should receive follow-up even if immediate answers are not possible. The focus is on responsiveness, and efficiency while avoiding extended debates or “back-and-forth” confrontations during meetings.

Finally, staff clarified that the city’s current public comment policy, adopted in 2018, governs procedures, and any modifications would require a new policy to be drafted and adopted. City Manager Patrick Bryant summarized the new draft policy would include allowing general public comment prior to action items, limited to three minutes per commenter with no total time limit, followed by a ten-minute break between the regular meeting and work session. The work session would take place at the table in a round format, concluding with a second public comment period limited to items on the work session agenda. Comment cards may also be provided for those who do not wish to speak, allowing written comments to be addressed later.

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The discussion included logistics of public participation, with suggestions to have residents approach the podium rather than raising hands to ensure audibility and equity, while allowing discretion for individuals who are unable to stand or prefer not to move. Breaks were intended to allow informal conversation, which need not be broadcast, with table microphones and Zoom covering formal discussion. Practical concerns were noted regarding camera angles, staff positioning, and managing papers. The Board concluded with agreement to move forward with the proposed process while keeping logistical adjustments in mind.

City Manager Patrick Bryant encouraged the Board to provide directions via email to staff to guide the preparation of a proposed policy, ensuring follow-up items are tracked, documented, and addressed without diminishing public access or input.

Public Comment

1. Julie Martinez – 3722 Majestic Cir.
2. Kathy Kingsbury – 817 Stratford Rd
3. Bill Hover – 89 Berkeley Rd.
4. Jan Hover – 89 Berkeley Rd.

Adjournment

Commissioner Lyda Steadman motioned to adjourn the Work Session. Mayor Pro Tem Graham Reiney seconded the motion. The motion was APPROVED unanimously. The Work Session adjourned at 6:56 pm.

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Karina Reyna, City Clerk