

CITY OF PINE LAKE
CITY COUNCIL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING & WORK SESSION
MINUTES
January 13, 2026 at 6:00PM
Courthouse & Council Chambers
459 Pine Drive, Pine Lake, GA 30072

Call to Order: Mayor Hall called the Organizational Meeting to order at 6:00PM.

Present: Mayor Brandy Hall, Council Members Jeff Goldberg and Thomas Torrent. Also present were City Manager Stanley Hawthorne, City Attorney Chris Balch, Chief of Police Sarai Y'Hudah-Green, Public Works Director Bernard Kendrick, City Clerk Ned Dagenhard, and Finance Associate Stephen Mayer.

Oath of Office

Superior Court Judge Ana Martinez presided over the swearing-in ceremony, for Council Members-elect Deborah Hull, Stephanie Kohler, and Jane Lowers.

The new Council Members were seated at the dais.

No other action was taken.

Nomination and Election – Mayor pro tempore

Mayor Hall called for nominations for Mayor pro tempore.

Council Member Kohler motioned to nominate Council Member Torrent as Mayor pro tempore.

Council Member Hull motioned to nominate Council Member Goldberg as Mayor pro tempore.

No further nominations were offered.

Mayor Hall called for a vote.

Council Members Kohler and Torrent voted for Council Member Torrent; Council Members Goldberg, Hull, and Lowers voted for Council Member Goldberg.

Council Member Goldberg was named Mayor pro tempore.

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Appointment of City Officers

Council Member Torrent motioned to appoint City Attorney Chris Balch, Chief Judge of Municipal Court L'Erin Barnes-Wiggins, Associate Judge of Municipal Court Tracy Moran, Solicitor of Municipal Court Jonathan Kester, and Public Defender of Municipal Court Ansley Sluss; Council Member Lowers seconded.

No discussion took place.

Mayor Hall called for a vote.

All members voted in favor, and the motioned carried.

Adjournment

Council Member Kohler motioned to adjourn the Organizational Meeting at 6:10PM.

Call to Order: Mayor Hall called the Work Session to order at 6:10PM.

Present: Mayor Brandy Hall, Mayor pro tempore Jeff Goldber, and Council Members Deborah Hull, Stephanie Kohler, Jane Lowers, and Thomas Torrent. Also present were City Manager Stanley Hawthorne, City Attorney Chris Balch, Chief of Police Sarai Y'Hudah-Green, Public Works Director Bernard Kendrick, City Clerk Ned Dagenhard, and Finance Associate Stephen Mayer.

Announcements and Communications

Mayor Hall stated she was inspired by the City of Pine Lake was so heavily considered for housing the "Monks for Peace" marching across the country, but that ultimately a larger County facility was selected. The Mayor added that she engaged in discussion regarding Rockbridge Road development on the heels of a the event with DeKalb County CEO Lorraine Cochran-Johnson and Commissioner Chakira Johnson.

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Adoption of the Agenda of the Day

Council Member Hull motioned to adopt the agenda; Council Member Torrent seconded.

No discussion took place.

Mayor Hall called for a vote.

All members voted in favor, and the motion carried.

Oath of Office

At the approval of the Mayor, the agenda was augmented to allow for the swearing-in of Municipal Court Judge L'Erin Barnes-Wiggins, whose arrival was delayed.

City Attorney Balch presided over the swearing-in of Judge Wiggins.

No other action was taken.

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New Business

1. 2024 Audit Report, Presentation – *McNair McClemore Middlebrooks & Co.*

Kurt Hardison, CPA of *McNair McClemore Middlebrooks & Co.* presented the City's 2024 Audit Report.

Council Member Torrent inquired as to whether the lack of a management communication letter was notable. Mayor Hall offered the context that the then-City Manager, also acting as City Clerk and Finance Director, was unavailable to communicate on the City's behalf regarding the auditing of the 2024 fiscal year.

Council Member Kohler asked whether certain findings were expected to be carried in 2025. Mr. Hardison responded that while he believed current staff and consultants could handle implementation of corrective actions going forward, the report itself was not provided until the end of the 2025 fiscal year.

Council Member Goldberg asked how the potentially changing the fiscal year calendar would affect the auditing schedule. Mr. Hardison stated that traditionally, a shorter fiscal year would be adopted first to cover the gap between fiscal year start dates.

Council Member Lowers asked which areas of improvement had been addressed within 2025. City Manager Hawthorne asked Finance Associate Stephen Mayer to address the question directly.

Mr. Mayer proceeded to provide context for each finding, referring to the corrective action plan.

Council Member Torrent asked whether budget actuals presented to department directors could be provided to City Council as well. City Manager Hawthorne responded in the affirmative.

No action was taken by City Council.

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2. 2026 City Council Meeting Calendar, Discussion

City Manager Hawthorne presented the draft Council Meeting calendar for 2026, citing the reduction by one meeting during the Summer months.

Council Member Torrent inquired about changing the fiscal year to begin in July rather than January. City Manager Hawthorne stated that the pros and cons of that change would be better addressed in more encompassing item discussion.

No action was taken by City Council.

3. City Council Orientation Kickoff

City Manager Hawthorne (re)presented the Operational Guide to the Governing Authority, and sought consensus on holding an orientation meeting between staff and the Governing Authority. The City Clerk observed consensus.

No action was taken by City Council.

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Reports and Other Business

Strategic Performance Report (SPR), January 2026

City Manager Hawthorne referred the Governing Authority to the recently developed Operational Guide, which we regarded as the monthly SPR.

Mayor

Mayor Hall thanked the public who attended the meeting, and stated that a State of the City town hall was being planned. The Mayor also encouraged the public to continue attending meetings—highlighting Work Sessions in particular for their lengthy discussion. Mayor Hall added that agenda packets are published (4) days in advance. The Mayor closed her remarks with a note of welcome to the newly-seated Council Members.

City Council

Council Member Torrent welcomed newly-seated Council Members, and thanked the public for their attendance, adding that any apology made for “attacking us” is unnecessary.

Council Member Goldberg thanked the newly-seated Council Members for their willingness to serve, and encouraged the public to continue participating, highlighting the value of continued communication.

Council Member Hull echoed other Council Member comments, adding that she is “happy to be here,” and a support of continued communication.

Council Member Lowers regarded attendance as “the most people I’ve seen at a meeting since I started attending in September.” Council Member Lowers added that as a scientist, she “like[s] data,” referring to the collection of opinions during the public comment section(s).

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Adjournment

Council Member Hull motioned to adjourn the Work Session at 7:57PM.

Ned Dagenhard

Ned Dagenhard, City Clerk

