

**CITY OF PINE LAKE
WORK SESSION
MINUTES
April 14, 2026 at 6:00PM
Courthouse & Council Chambers
459 Pine Drive, Pine Lake, GA 30072**

Call to Order: Mayor pro tem Goldberg called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00PM.

Present: Mayor pro tempore Jeff Goldberg, and Council Members Deborah Hull, Stephanie Kohler, Jane Lowers (*attending via teleconference*), 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, Finance Director Stephen Mayer, and City Clerk Ned Dagenhard.

Announcements/Communications

Mayor pro tem Goldberg announced that Council Member Lowers would be joining the meeting via teleconference.

Mr. Goldberg added that the previous week saw the loss of a “member of the community,” Jackie Biggers. He added that those who knew Ms. Biggers had a warm place in their heart, and that, “anytime we lose somebody in our small community, it’s a big deal.”

Council Member Hull announced that the *Pollination Celebration*—a music, craft, and vendor fair centered around springtime ecology—would take place Sunday, May 3rd from 12:00-4:00PM in and around the Beach House.

Adoption of the Agenda of the Day

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

No discussion took place.

Mayor pro tem Goldberg called for a vote.

All members voted in favor, and the motion carried.

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New Business

1. Finance Update

City Manager Hawthorne re-introduced Finance Director Stephen Mayer. The City Manager provided context regarding the recent installation of a Finance Director, the first in Pine Lake's history.

Mr. Mayer discussed the status of the department and set tentative goals surrounding final implementation of the City's enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, and production of budget-to-actual reports for the benefit of department heads, as well as the City Council and public. Both Mr. Mayer and Mr. Hawthorne emphasized multiple times, in different statements, the newness of the department.

Mr. Mayer also alluded to the addition of a second individual to the City's account from *Sumter Local Government Consulting*. In a clarification to Council Member Torrent, Mr. Mayer added that this would bear no additional cost to the City.

No action was taken by City Council.

2. Permit for Out-of-Season Swimming, Lake/Beach

Council Member Torrent stated the purpose of the proposed action, which was to allow for swimming during *LakeFest*, which takes place 3 weeks after the codified end of the swimming season.

City Attorney Balch and Public Works Director Kendrick provided information for City Council consideration, related to liability, ordinance amendment procedure, and cost associated with water testing activities required during the swimming season.

Council Member Lowers, joined by other members, expressed a desire to proceed under the "one-off" approval of swimming during LakeFest, rather than pursue a redesign of the swimming season and out-of-season swimming permissions.

No action was taken by City Council.

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3. Amending Chapter 16, Sec.(c)(6) – Allowing for Open Fire Under Permit

Council Member Torrent introduced the topic, referencing past practice of permitting fire pits on the Pine Lake Beach for resident celebrations.

City Attorney Balch outlined liability concerns related to permitting open fires in public spaces. In addition to this, Mr. Balch presented to City Council information related to the Governor of Georgia’s recent order banning outdoor burning due to unseasonably dry conditions, which would pre-empt any outdoor burning.

City Council appeared to be in uniform agreement against allowing open fire permits in public spaces.

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4. Vegetation Management, Pine Lake Dam

Council Member Torrent introduced the topic, voicing interest in exploring banning use of chemical herbicides on City-owned property.

Public Works Director Kendrick stated that prior and ongoing discussions with members of the community, plus the City's pursuing of *Bee City USA* designation, had led the Department to pursue Integrative Pest Management (IPM) process that avoids traditional pesticides and herbicides. Director Kendrick continued that while Georgia statute bars local municipalities from an outright ban, the Public Works Department adopting an internal policy would avoid interaction with such pre-emption. Finally, Mr. Kendrick added that the City does not currently possess any traditional herbicides or pesticides, and has no interest in procuring such materials. "If you see somebody spraying anything in the near future," he said, "it is vinegar and salt, which kills most weeds."

Mayor pro tem Goldberg asked about IPM certification. Director Kendrick replied that he was in the midst of locating a testing location, and that he had previously held IPM certification in South Carolina.

Council Member Kohler confirmed with City Attorney Balch that a resolution would not be necessary to hold Public Works to a standard of non-procurement/use of traditional pesticides and herbicides.

Mayor pro tem Goldberg voiced interest in pursuing a policy in the future for branding purposes.

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5. Rockbridge Road Mural Project

Council Member Torrent presented the topic, referring to the mural project as an opportunity to support the City's community-building mission.

City Manager Hawthorne stated that the item would be brought forward in an initial step at the April 28th Regular Meeting, informing City Council that Pine Lake had received a direct payment of \$20,000 from DeKalb County for the mural project, initially negotiated by Mayor-emeritus Melanie Hammett. The deposit, Mr. Hawthorne continued, would need to be formally journaled in the City's receivables before being appropriated. Following journaling, the City Manager added, a discussion would be pertinent for how to approach the project itself.

Mayor pro tem Goldberg offered thanks to former Mayors Brandy Hall and Melanie Hammett for their work in negotiating the funds.

A discussion took place between Council Members Kohler and Torrent regarding the continuation of the Municipal Arts Panel (MAP).

Mayor pro tem Goldberg voiced a desire to proceed with the project under an approach of "help us paint it," referring to community participation in mural installation.

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6. City Manager, Interim and Recruitment Services – *Sumter Local Government Consulting*

City Manager Hawthorne explained to City Council the process for recruiting a City Manager, emphasizing the possible timeline for final selection and promotion as being as long as six months.

A brief exchange took place between Council Member Torrent and City Attorney Balch regarding community input around City Manager selection.

Council Member Hull inquired about the timeline for selection, as well as alternative avenues outside of professional consultants for recruitment. Mr. Hawthorne referenced the selection process that promoted his contract as City Manager, which involved an interim City Manager referral through the Georgia Municipal Association. The interim City Manager, Bill Beckett—Mr. Hawthorne continued—was solely responsible for recruiting candidates.

Multiple members of the City Council expressed a desire to hear directly from *Sumter's* President, Warren Hutmacher.

A consensus was observed to proceed with a request for presentation by *Sumter* at the next available City Council meeting.

No other action was taken by City Council.

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7. Georgia Interlocal Risk Management Agency (GIRMA) Insurance Renewal

A brief discussion took place, wherein City Manager Hawthorne described the 2026-2027 proposal from GIRMA, and referenced a 4% increase in annual premium. However, since the City received a renewal credit—Mr. Hawthorne added—the actual rate increase was effectively 0%.

Council Member Kohler inquired about payment schedule; Mr. Hawthorne stated the payments would occur quarterly.

Council Member Hull inquired about whether a discount was available if the annual premium was paid in full; Mr. Hawthorne replied in the negative.

Council Member Torrent asked about other insurance providers in the marketplace; Mr. Hawthorne responded that because GIRMA is a pool that includes many cities across the State, the presence of a competitor was highly unlikely.

A brief exchange occurred between Mayor pro tem Goldberg and the City Manager regarding cybersecurity coverage.

A consensus was observed to authorize administration to proceed with payment of the first of four quarterly payments, with the intention to adopt a resolution authorizing GIRMA as the City's insurer for the 2026-2027 period at the next available City Council meeting.

No other action was taken by the City Council.

Reports and Other Business

Strategic Performance Report (SPR), April 2026

City Manager Hawthorne presented a section of the April 2026 SPR (*available in full on the City website*). The discussion revolved around short- and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Mayor pro tem

Mr. Goldberg voiced a desire to proceed with future Town Hall events, and stated that the Public Works Director had developed recommendations for discussion regarding beautification along the Pine Lake dam.

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Council Member Hull echoed praise for the Town Hall, but added that some residents were disappointed in a lack of real time responses to questions posed.

Council Member Torrent inquired about comments presented by previous Mayor Greg Zarus. Mayor pro tem Goldberg clarified that those comments were made during a friendly “walk and talk,” and Mr. Goldberg had asked that he transmit those comments via email.

Council Member Lowers announced that she and Council Member Kohler would be holding a *Community Chat* event at the Beach House the following Sunday, focused on “who and what is Pine Lake?” This chat, Dr. Lowers continued, would be in relation to the ongoing Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Comprehensive Plan survey.

Council Member Kohler echoed support for residents engaging with the ARC survey, and pushed residents to read the Strategic Performance Reports that staff publish monthly.

Mayor pro tem Goldberg stated that he had recently met with Georgia Forestry regarding the City’s tree conservation ordinance. He added that he had also met with senior staff for the City following the departure of the City’s Mayor.

Adjournment

Council Member Torrent motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 9:00PM.

Ned Dagenhard

Ned Dagenhard, City Clerk

