

**CITY OF PINE LAKE
WORK SESSION MINUTES
January 14th, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Pine Lake Courthouse
459 Pine Drive, Pine Lake, GA**

Call to Order: Mayor pro tem Bordeaux called the Work Session to order at 6:01pm.

Present: Mayor pro tem Bordeaux, Council Member Jeff Goldberg, Council Member Thomas Torrent, Council Member Tom Ramsey, and Council Member Augusta Woods. Also present were City Manager Stanley Hawthorne, Chief of Police Sarai Y'hudah-Green, City Attorney Chris Balch, and Assistant City Clerk Ned Dagenhard. Mayor Hall and Public Works Special Projects Manager Bernard Kendrick were not in attendance.

Announcements and Communications

Council Member Goldberg announced that the Pine Lake Association for Involved Neighbors would be hosting a recycling event the following Saturday.

Council Member Ramsey thanked Administrative Coordinator Missye Varner for her recovery of an existing resolution regarding domestic partnerships.

Adoption of the Agenda of the Day

Council Member Torrent moved to adopt the Agenda of the Day; Council Member Ramsey seconded.

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux advised that New Business items 2 and 3 were added to the agenda late (*revised agenda was immediately republished*).

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux called for a vote.

All members voted in favor, and the motion carried.

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New Business

1. Introduction of City Attorney Chris Balch

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux invited City Attorney Chris Balch to introduce himself.

Mr. Balch expressed gratitude in the Governing Authority's confidence in allowing him to serve in his respective role. Mr. Balch continued that it was his first mission to develop an understanding of policy priorities, adding that he knows the previous two City Attorneys for Pine Lake and recognizes he has "big shoes to fill."

Council Member Ramsey inquired about litigation between the City of Brookhaven and the DeKalb Tax Assessor's Office. Mr. Balch advised that that issue had not arisen to a lawsuit.

Council Member Goldberg thanked Mr. Balch for taking a private meeting with him, and encouraged other Council Members to request the same.

All members of the body thanked and welcomed the new City Attorney.

No action was taken by City Council.

2. H.B. 581, Statewide Homestead Exemption – Discussion

A discussion took place, wherein City Attorney Chris Balch explained the purpose, mechanism, and potential ramifications of HB 581. City Attorney Balch explained that the General Assembly had not provided clear direction for setting Public Hearing schedules should the City choose to opt-out of the Statewide Homestead Exemption. It was Mr. Balch's suggestion, he continued, that the City use the model set forth by the millage rate adoption process.

A discussion ensued as to when Public Hearings ought to take place, considering the March 1st, 2025 deadline for filing necessary documentation with the Secretary of State's office. The suggestion was put forth that the hearings be scheduled for **January 28th at 7:00PM; February 11th at 11:00AM; and February 11th at 6:00PM**. A consensus of City Council was observed

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux proposed following City Attorney Balch's recommendation for providing Public Hearing notice via the City's official news organ (*The DeKalb Champion*); a consensus of City Council was observed.

No further action was taken by City Council

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3. Domestic Partners Resolution Update

Council Member Ramsey introduced the topic, stating that he had been approached by residents intending to utilize Domestic Partnership certification to solve an issue related to healthcare coverage. Mr. Ramsey continued that multiple DeKalb County cities offer this service. Upon requesting City Administration to research in preparation for a resolution, an existing resolution was discovered, filed physically at City Hall.

Council Member Torrent offered his support for the resolution, suggesting that an ordinance and/or Charter amendment may be more appropriate. In response to this, City Attorney Balch suggested that an ordinance was the most appropriate vehicle given the timeline associated with Charter amendments.

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux suggested preparing an ordinance for the next regular session.

Council Member Ramsey asked the City Attorney if the existing resolution could be utilized by the aforementioned residents, and Mr. Balch responded in the affirmative.

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4. Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) for Regular Employees

Council Member Torrent spoke first on the issue, in support of a COLA, as well as merit-based raises and/or bonuses for staff.

Council Member Woods echoed Mr. Torrent's comments.

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux suggested verifying the 3% increase figure listed in the supplemental document, which was echoed by Council Member Ramsey, who cited the 2.5% figure published by the Social Security Administration.

City Manager Stanley Hawthorne advised the Governing Authority that no COLA had taken place at the beginning had been offered at the beginning of 2024. In response to this, Council Member Torrent suggested the 3% figure may be insufficient.

City Manager Stanley Hawthorne then spoke at some length in support of increases in compensation overall, citing concern over staff retention.

A discussion took place regarding the timeline for adoption of a 2025 COLA and further discussion of increases in staff compensation.

No action was taken by City Council.

5. Communications Plan & Policy – Discussion of Tactical Next Steps (For example, setting up a Facebook page, who will be able to post on it, what's happening with the recordings of broadcasted meetings, etc.)

City Council discussed tactical next steps, specifically preferences surrounding social media communication and interfacing with the public (i.e. dialogue, comments).

Further discussion took place regarding delegation of social media management responsibilities, to be housed within the Administration Department.

Positive sentiments were expressed regarding the City's implementation of "live-streaming" City Council Meetings on YouTube, with the added action items of troubleshooting technical issues and publishing meeting links to the Pine Lake website, and eventual the yet-to-be-created Pine Lake Facebook account.

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux suggested to the rest of City Council that the Communications Policy acts as a living document to be amended and re-adopted as needed.

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Council Member Goldberg suggested that the Governing Authority be intentional and strategic with implementation of the Communication Policy, and thanked the Administration Department for their continued efforts.

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Reports and Other Business

Public Safety – Chief Sarai Y’hudah-Green

The supplemental report presented is available to the public upon request. Please contact Asst. City Clerk Ned Dagenhard at (404) 999-4901 or neddagenhard@pinelakega.net for more information.

Public Works – Special Projects Manager Bernard Kendrick

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City Council

Mayor pro tem Bordeaux expressed appreciation to City Council and staff, describing a “very productive meeting.”

Council Member Torrent echoed earlier comments made regarding Corporal Andrew Atkins of the Pine Lake Police Department, who responded to a welfare check on foot due to unsafe road conditions. Mr. Torrent reasserted the suggestion that all members of the City of Pine Lake organization be trained in first amendment rights as a safeguard against predatory lawsuits. Mr. Torrent also thanked Public Works for their continued wetlands maintenance efforts, stating that increased visibility would help address functional issues related to the wetland pipe and flume network. Mr. Torrent concluded his comments by welcoming new staff.

Council Members Woods and Ramsey echoed Council Member Torrent’s comments and welcome.

Council Member Goldberg thanked City Manager Hawthorne, and expressed excitement and optimism at Pine Lake being fully-staffed.

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Adjournment

Council Member Ramsey moved for adjournment at 8:02pm.



Ned Dagenhard
City Clerk or Delegate

