**Minutes**

**Forsyth City Council Meeting**

**Monday, August 4, 2025**

**Call to Order**

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation and Roll Call**

Mayor Wilson led the Pledge of Allegiance. The invocation was led by Reverend Rod Callahan. In attendance for the meeting was Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers Josh Hill, Chris Hewett, Lois Allen, Greg Goolsby, Charles Wilder, and Mike Dodd. Also in attendance was City Manager, Craig Mims; Assistant City Manager, Regina Ivie; City Attorney, Brian Causey; and City Clerk, Shayla Furlow. Six members of the council were in attendance for the meeting; therefore, all unanimous votes will be six votes (Hill, Hewett, Allen, Goolsby, Wilder and Dodd).

**Approval of the agenda**

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Allen; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of the minutes from the council meeting held on July 21, 2025**

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the minutes from the council meeting held on July 21, 2025 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

**Lee Smith- Sewer Issue**

Mr. Adam Ryan Tolbert at 917 Tucker Road, Macon, Georgia stated that on April 20, 2025 the issue was reported to Johnson Plumbing by Mr. Lee Smith at 76 North Jackson Street. Mr. Johnson came out to do the repair and it lasted three days. The invoice for the repair was dated April 20, 2025. The original problem originated in a line that was on Morse Street in a manhole in the cities right of way. There are six cleanouts along an older line on Jackson Street, the side of Morse Street closest to the property at 76 Jackson Street, there's another manhole with an older line that was constructed before 1980. He stated that their argument is that city code section 23-38 states that there are no private sewers on any piece of property in the city. So, all these pieces of property are connected to a city sewer or a public sewer, which directly runs into the line that caused the issue. The problem occurred in the right-of-way of the city, in a manhole owned and constructed by the city or a contractor. A repair was made, and that repair is over $16,000. He stated that their argument is that the city is solely responsible for that repair. He stated that city code section 23-60 states that the size, slope, alignment, and materials of construction of building sewer, and methods used in excavating, placing a pipe, joining, testing, backfilling, the trend shall conform to the requirements of the Building and Plumbing Codes and other applicable rules and regulations of the city. The city manager or his or her deputy shall be authorized to establish and enforce reasonable technical design, inspection, and regulations for the construction and maintenance of components of the sewers. Mr. Tolbert stated that the main thing is the inspection and the maintenance. Had the sewer been regularly inspected and maintained, the problem would not have occurred in the 6-inch line backing up the older line where it backed up into Mr. Smith's building. Their argument is using this section of the code where it says the city manager or his or her deputy is authorized to establish and enforce reasonable technical design, inspection, regulations for the construction and maintenance of the components of the sewer system and that the city should be responsible for the repairs of the sewers.

Mr. John Ambrose stated that he wanted to reiterate that the manhole covers in the road and the other manhole cover is on city property. That's where the line connects. He stated that Mr. Johnson came out and it was stopped up. He used his camera to go through some clean out holes on the main line out of Mr. Smith's building. They could see when he got down in there that it was a root in there. He stated that Mr. Johnson had to go into that other manhole cover. He stated that the line underneath the road and manhole cover, belonged to the city. If anybody with the maintenance department had driven down that road and saw that sidewalk bubbling up at that tree and your sewage system right, there they should have known that something was wrong. He stated that this was just a temporary fix and that the corrugated pipe underneath the road rotten and dilapidated.

Mr. Lee Smith questioned where does the city responsibility for the sewer end and where the lateral begins? He stated that they think the lateral begins at the manhole that is sitting on the side of the road in the right-of-way that was discovered in the process of cleaning out the routes. They had a powwow and Keith Helms stated that the city is responsible for the six-inch line and they are responsible for the four-inch lateral. Mr. Smith stated that Herbie discovered the manhole which he believes, without a doubt, belongs to the city and needs to be maintained by the city. He stated that they want the city to dig up the road between the two manhole covers and install a six-inch line, and then they will have Herbie to connect the three lodges. Mr. Smith stated that he was at a meeting for this issue a few months ago and Mr. Adam Tolbert studied the codes.

Mayor Wilson stated that the claim information was submitted to the insurance company after the meeting Mr. Smith attended a few months ago.

Mr. Hill questioned who the tree belongs to and stated that he believes that it’s a privately-owned tree. He stated that the information was submitted to the insurance company and the city hasn’t heard anything yet. Mr. Hill stated that he wished that a city would have been involved in the onset. They brought out a company to not knowing that it would be $16,000 and he wasn’t certain that the city is responsible for the $16,000. The city did not contract that person to come out. He stated to Mr. Smith that they must wait on the insurance company because that's the plan of action that was taken at the last meeting he attended.

Mr. Adam Tolbert questioned what will be done in the future to prevent what has happened with the tree and this older line? Is the city going forward going to work on bringing the old Terracotta line up to code? What's that look like in the future?

Mr. Goolsby stated that he thinks the process of where the city is with the insurance company is probably the right thing to do today. He questioned if the plumber had been paid? He stated that he understands that this line on the road has some gray area to it, whether it's inherited by the city. Mr. Goolsby agreed with Councilman Hill that when these issues come up, they need to coordinate with the city.

Mr. Wilder stated that they don't want to make any final decisions right now, they must wait until the insurance company decides, and then they can see what we can do after that.

**Public Hearing for a** **Variance Request for change in use of 139 Blount Street, Serenity House of Hope.**

Mr. Dean Nelson, the Community Development Director, stated that Ms. Rosa Evans of Serenity House of Hope Adult Day Care and Health Services applied for a variance to allow 139 Blount Street, Tax Parcel F18 037 to be used for an Adult Day Care and Health Services. Previously, the property had been granted a variance to be used as a community living space limited to a maximum of six residents. The subject property is a single-family residence situated within a neighborhood, and both it and the parcel surrounding the subject property are single-family dwelling units, zoned Residential Moderate Density (R-3). The city's zoning ordinance does not currently have a definition for that or list it in the table of uses in Table 6.1, Permitted and Conditional Uses in Conventional Residential Zoning Districts, within Article 6 of the zoning ordinance. Therefore, due to the existing variance, Ms. Evans was advised that she would need to request a variance. The definition of a variance is a grant or leave from the requirements of this zoning ordinance, which permits construction or use in a matter otherwise prohibited, which may be approved in individual cases upon application and applied to a specific property where compliance may result in a particular hardship upon the owner, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience or a desire to make a profit. He stated that the variance is a minimal relaxation or modification of the strict terms of regulations of the zoning ordinance, which are dimensional in nature as applied to a specific property. Staff recommendation, Section 33.1, provides the authority to grant variances, and introduces the concept and specifically states that variances may be authorized when, owing to special conditions and literal enforcement of the provisions of the zoning ordinance, will, in an individual case, result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardships. Mr. Nelson stated that the variance request is the result of a change in the use initiated by the owner-applicant, not the result of a topographic or other hardship as defined by the ordinance. The applicant does point out that the previous variance grants a non-permitted use as a congregate living arrangement with limitations. On June 28th, the Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing, and the applicant spoke in favor of the petition deciding the need for this type of service. There was opposition to the petition from a representative of the neighborhood who cited traffic concerns, stating the continued precedence of non-residential uses of homes in residential zoning districts, loss of value to homes, safety, and a desire for the city to uphold the integrity of a residential neighborhood. Upon the closure of the hearing, the Board voted 3-1 to recommend approval of the variance by the City Council, citing its current variance as a congregate living facility.

Mayor Wilson opened the public hearing for comments of those in favor of and opposition to the proposed Variance Request for change in use of 139 Blount Street, Serenity House of Hope.

Ms. Rosa Evans stated that she was born in Monroe County, and she is a Monroe County native, but she lives in Barnesville and that seems to be the problem with some people. She questioned why living in Barnesville would have anything to do with her opening a business in Monroe County. She stated that her adult day program was a community living arrangement, whereas she was licensed for six adults to come in and live. She had a problem in her home where her son got sick, and she needed to spend more time with him, and she could not work overnight. Ms. Evans stated that she decided she wanted to bring something else to the community by expanding services to an adult day program. The adult day program consists of having people come during the day, between the hours of 8:30 to 2:30, Monday through Friday. The program starts at age 18 and up. It's open to anybody that would like to come. She stated that she is a private home care provider she recruits people to stay at home to take care of their loved ones, and they are paid through Medicaid. This is an expansion of the program that she is already doing. Ms. Evans provided the council with flyers. She stated that their goal is to enhance the quality of life for adults 18 and older by promoting independence, healing, and comfort. They also provide care for individuals who need support to remain safe at home and in the community. They also offer a schedule base, which includes health, social services, therapeutic activities, exercise, and nutritional meals. Transportation will be provided for those that need it.

Mr. Nathaniel Freeman Willis Wilder stated that they did everything that they were told to do to be compliant with the state.

Mr. George Foster stated that it’s about being safe and, in his opinion, things of this nature are not safe for their community because they haven't said anything about what will make it more secure. He felt that it will involve a lot of people they don't know, coming into the community. He stated that it presents a problem as far as safety because they don't have control on their movement. Mr. Foster stated that it’s a resident that has another resident directly behind her and the area is about a half-acre.

Ms. Kimberly Crawford Davis at 142 Blount Street stated that she was speaking on behalf of her mother, who would be living exactly in front of this adult daycare center. She stated that the home is located on a hill, which deals with the traffic flow. The facility will likely generate an increase in the daily traffic in that neighborhood. She stated that the reason they did not stop the last variance is because her father was in Emory dying of cancer, and we warned him we did not get the opportunity. Many of our members in the community were not aware of what the sign sitting in front of the neighborhood was. Since that time, they have been seeing various signs popping up, and now they are aware of what the signs mean. Ms. Davis stated that the other location of the adult daycare center, is located at the end of a road. Many people did not see the sign because it's at the end of the street. Ms. Davis addressed her concerns about privacy, property values and the safety of the community and requested that the council deny the variance.

Ms. Shannon Wimberly at 142 Blount Street stated that she was speaking on behalf of Aretha Neal Thompson. at 31 Blount Street. She stated that Ms. Thompson was unable to attend this meeting tonight because of a prior commitment. MS. Wimberly stated that Ms. Thompson signed the petition against the variance because she became concerned for her friend and neighbor, Maureen Crawford, that lives at 142 Blount Street. She is a widow that lives alone, and she has no knowledge of the client makeup that will be attending the proposed adult daycare facility. Not only Ms. Crawford, but there are other neighbors like herself with concerns. She questioned why new variance is needed, what is the license enrollment number of clients that will be attending, what are the specific needs or requirements of the adults that will be enrolled. She also questioned the number of staff required to be on duty, what training and certification is required for the staff that will be in care of the adults attending, and have traffic control issues like arrival and departure times considered. She stated that when Dollar General had interest in the community, that was a major concern for the citizens in the area.

Ms. Mekiera Buckner-Johnson at 249 Blount Street addressed her concerns with the property value decrease, safety, and traffic in the neighborhood. She stated that they have a petition that people in the neighborhood signed.

Ms. Rosa Evans stated that she was going to address some of the concerns. She stated that they're concerned about the traffic and the value of their property. She questioned how will this affect the value of their property? She stated that as far as the capacity is concerned, she might not even have one person after all of this. The people that will be coming don't have to be from out of town. They're neighborhood people. She stated that many people in the neighborhood signed the petition and didn’t know what they were signing. Ms. Evans stated that she was here to do a service for the community, not to hurt anybody.

There being no further public comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed Variance Request for change in use of 139 Blount Street, Serenity House of Hope, Mayor Wilson closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Wilder questioned if the staff must have any required certifications.

Ms. Evans stated that all staff has have CPR certification.

Mr. Hill questioned how she ensures safety.

Ms. Evans stated with supervision and locking the doors.

Mr. Hill questioned is she able to remain open with the current variance.

Mr. Brian Causey, the City Attorney, stated that it depends on when the variance closes.

Mr. Hill offered a motion to deny the Variance Request for change in use of 139 Blount Street, Serenity House of Hope. Seconded by Mr. Dodd.

Mr. Wilder stated that he did not know that this existed in the community.

Mr. Hill stated that it is a good idea, he just feels that it should not be in that area.

After a brief discussion Mayor Wilson called the vote on the motion to deny the Variance Request for change in use of 139 Blount Street, Serenity House of Hope. The motion to deny was approved with five votes in favor (Hill, Hewett, Goolsby, Wilder, and Dodd) and one abstention (Allen).

**Public Hearing to revise and amend articles of the Zoning Ordinance to regulate data centers.**

Mr. Brian Causey, the City Attorney, stated that an ordinance of the mayor a council of the city of Forsyth, Georgia, to enact text amendments to Article 2 Definitions and Interpretations, and Article 10 Nonresidential Zoning Districts, and Article 15 Specific Provisions for Principal Nonresidential Buildings and Uses, of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Forsyth, Relating to Data Centers, to provide an effective date, and for other purposes related thereto.

Mr. Dean Nelson, the Community Development Director, stated that communities both locally and nationally are undergoing changes due to the proliferation of data centers, supporting cloud computing, technology, and artificial intelligence. The growth of this recent technology sector is causing stress and conflict within communities caught off guard by a sudden emergence. The city of Forsyth currently has no ordinances regulating data centers. Therefore, the Community Development Director recommends approval of text amendments within the proposed ordinance. That's a crucial step toward planning for the future to reduce any potential conflicts. He stated that the City would like you to consider text amendments to Article 2, which provides a definition of data centers, which would be a facility, campus, or facilities, or array of independent or interconnected equipment used to store, manage, process, exchange, house, or disseminate digital data and information, which may include, but is not limited to, computers, servers, networking equipment, and supporting infrastructure searches, such as power supply and cooling. He asked that they take into consideration amending Table 10.1, Permitted and Conditional Uses in Non-Residential Districts of Article 10 Non-Residential Zoning Districts, of the Forsyth Zoning Code to add a new entry into the table allowing data centers as Conditional Use within Institutional, Highway Business, and Agricultural Zoning districts and Permitted with the Manufacturing-Industrial zoning district. Mr. Nelson stated that Specific Provisions of Principal Non-Residential Buildings and Uses, which would add subsection 15.6 in alphabetic order to regulate design and construction. In districts where allowed, data centers shall meet the following criteria. To provide screening and reduce noise levels, all equipment for cooling, ventilation, or otherwise operating the facility, including generators or other power supply equipment, must be fully enclosed, except when determined by the zoning administrator not to be mechanically feasible. If the zoning administrator determines that full enclosure is not mechanically feasible, all equipment for cooling, ventilation, or power generation must be screened by a wall or similar barrier. In addition, any accessory electrical substation must be screened from adjacent non-residential properties or public streets by a wall or similar barrier. The standard does not apply to solar panels. A data center building must include a main entrance feature that is differentiated from the remainder of the building facade by a change in building material, pattern, texture, color, or accent material. The entrance feature must also either project or recess from the adjoining building plan. The primary facade of data centers must include either a change in the primary facade surface for approximately every 150 horizontal feet of at least one of the following building material pattern, texture, color, or accent material. A minimum of 30% of the primary facade must be comprised of windows, doors, or similar administration design features, such as faux windows that are generally distributed horizontally and vertically across the facade. The primary facade shall be deemed to be a facade that fronts upon a public street. He stated that when allowed, data centers shall be constructed in accordance with and subject to Table 10.2, Dimensional Requirements for Non-Residential Zoning Districts and Zoning Coordinates of Course Sites. The amendments incorporate the state definition of a data center as well as suggested zoning districts. The criteria for data centers for Section 15.6 was adapted from the Urban Land Use Local Guidelines for Data Center Development by the ULI Americas Data Center Product Council.

Mr. Nelson stated that on July 28, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on the matter. There was no opposition to the amendments, and upon closure of the meeting, the Board voted to recommend a passage of the text amendment with the recommendation that all four zoning districts proposed by staff be conditional in use, with none permitted.

Mayor Wilson opened the Public Hearing for comments of those in favor of or opposition to the proposed revision and amendment to articles of the Zoning Ordinance to regulate data centers.

Mr. George Emami at 30 East Johnson Street stated that he was in attendance to politely ask for amendments and that the definition of a data center was very broad. He stated that Mr. Nelson pointed out that the code was derived from a Data Center Development Code, which implicitly implies that this is more for new developments or new building. He stated that his specific request is that they limit this to new development. Essentially, if you have an older building that's existing, and particularly if it's one that has a historic nature to it, you don’t to mess with the facade. Mr. Emami stated that his only hope, given that this does restrict a property, would be to add more to the code that would allow buildings past a certain age or even existing buildings to not have the requirements. He stated that he has a building that is zoned and has a permitted use for data centers under the current zoning that if this got enacted, he would have to rearrange the entire facade on the building

There being no further comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed revision and amendment to articles of the Zoning Ordinance to regulate data centers Mayor Wilson closed the Public Hearing and stated that it is not for Council's consideration.

 Mr. Goolsby stated that in conditional use, each one is going to be handled uniquely differently because it's conditional use.

Mayor Wilson questioned if the city’s zoning currently allows for data centers?

Mr. Dean Nelson, the Community Development Director, stated that we don't have a data center in our zoning ordinance now. Anything that would be reviewed would be strictly under the noise ordinance.

After a lengthy discussion the council agreed to have the City Attorney, and the Community Development Director consider how to include elements of new construction and existing buildings in the design criteria for data centers.

**Approval of the Water Tower Lease Agreement between the City of Forsyth and Verizon Wireless.**

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the Water Tower Lease Agreement between the City of Forsyth and Verizon Wireless. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

**City Manager’s Report**

Mr. Craig Mims, the City Manager, reported that the ECG Training Institute groundbreaking ceremony will be held on Wednesday, August 27, 2025 at 11:00a.m. at Indian Springs Business Park.

**City Attorney Report**

Mr. Brian Causey, the City Attorney, stated that he will be working on data centers.

**Mayor’s Report**

Mayor Wilson had no business to report.

**Council Board Reports**

Mr. Hill reported that the Main Street concert was cancelled due to rain.

Mrs. Allen reported that the Convention & Visitors Bureau Board is continuing to work on 2025 goals and planning upcoming events. She stated that Ms. Stanbery would be taking a banner to Ms. Chelsea at Her Majesty Kitchen.

**Additional Business**

Mr. Hill thanked the public works crew for mowing Montpelier Road and questioned if the city could get a street sweeper for the debris.

**Public Comments**

No public Comments.

**Executive Session (if necessary)**

No executive session needed.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business Mr. Hill offered a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:03p.m. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.