CITY OF LAVONIA COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING – MINUTES

June 1, 2026

5:30 PM

Present: Mayor Courtney Umbehant
Councilman – Eddie Floyd
Councilman – Michael Schulman
Councilman - Jeremy Madden
Councilman - Andrew Murphy

Attorney: Jay Doss

Media: M. J. Kneizer– WLHR
Charlie Eavenson – Franklin County Citizen

Staff: City Manager - Robert Ogburn
Asst. City Clerk – Barbara Busby
Deputy Police Chief – Daniel Carson
DDA Director – Ashley Umbehant
Water Billing Clerk – Sandra Whitfield

Item 1. **Call to Order**:
Mayor Courtney Umbehant called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Item 2. **Invocation and Pledge of Alliance to the American flag:** led by Councilman Floyd.

Item 3. **Confirmation of a Quorum:**
Mayor Umbehant confirmed that all members were present, and a quorum was established.

Item 4. **Consent Agenda Items** & **Approval of Minutes:**

a) Approval of the June Meeting Agenda as presented.

b) Approval of Minutes – May 4, 2026, Regular Meeting; May 11, 2026, Work Session

c) Acceptance of the May 2026 Financial Report as presented.

Motion to approve the consent agenda items was made by Councilman Michael Schulman and seconded by Councilman Andrew Murphy. The motion carried unanimously.

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Item 5. **Surplus Vehicles:**

City Manager Robert Ogburn presented two vehicles recommended for surplus disposal:

a. 2008 Ford F-150, VIN: 1FTRF12W18KD34843
b. 2008 Ford F-150, VIN: 1FTRF12W38KD34844

Mayor Umbehant noted that both vehicles were due to be rotated out of the city's fleet and would be listed on GovDeals.

Motion to surplus the two 2008 Ford F-150 vehicles was made by Councilman Jeremy Madden and seconded by Councilman Andrew Murphy. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 6. **Resolution for Employee Assistance Program through GMA**

A resolution was presented for the adoption of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) available through the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). Mayor Umbehant noted that the program had been discussed with staff, and a resolution was brought forward for council action.

Motion to approve the resolution for the Employee Assistance Program through GMA was made by Councilman Eddie Floyd and seconded by Councilman Michael Schulman. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 7. **New Employee Introduction: Sandra Whitfield**

City Manager Ogburn introduced Sandra Whitfield, the city's new Water Clerk. Mayor Umbehant noted that Ms. Whitfield had been with the city for a couple of weeks and had already earned positive feedback regarding her customer service. The Council welcomed her to her new role.

Item 8. **Legal: N/A**

There were no legal items to address.

Item 9. **Mayor's Report:**

Mayor Umbehant provided updates on several initiatives and upcoming community events.

Mayor's Council on People of All Abilities: The Mayor reported that the fourth meeting of the Mayor's Council on People of All Abilities was held on May 5th. He identified transportation for individuals with special needs as one of the council's primary challenges, noting that Franklin County's unique geography — with five cities spread across the county — makes centralized service delivery particularly difficult. The next meeting of the council is scheduled for Tuesday, August 11 at 6:00 PM in the courtroom, and Mayor Umbehant extended a public invitation to all interested parties.

Upcoming June Events: Mayor Umbehant outlined a busy schedule of community events for the month of June:

June 4 – Ribbon cutting for the city's newest mural.

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June 6 – Hot Rod Fest in downtown Lavonia, sponsored by AutoZone, Harbor Lumber, and Image Marketing.

June 10– An international television recording at the gazebo, featuring the J Creek Cloggers. The Mayor encouraged residents to attend and help generate a crowd of approximately 200 people in downtown.

June 12 – The next Music on Main event.

June 13– Juneteenth celebration at Springview Height Park.

June 20 – America 250 celebration, a special Saturday edition of Music on Main featuring multiple bands and a drone show to celebrate the nation's 250th birthday**.**

Item 10. **City Manager's Report:**

City Manager Ogburn provided updates on several operational and infrastructure matters.

Reservoir Treatment: The city conducted its periodic treatment of the reservoir to manage growth in the secondary water source.

Water Treatment Plant – Phase 1: Bids for Phase 1 of the water treatment plant project will be opened on June 16 at 10:00 AM. Construction is anticipated to begin in late August or early September.

Gerrard Road Repaving: A bid for repaving the remainder of Gerrard Road was expected to be advertised within the week, with a required four-week advertisement period.

LMIG Grant – Phase 2: City Manager Ogburn reported that the second phase of the LMIG grant was approved after submission. The $58,000 in funds was expected to arrive within approximately ten days, with plans to use them to repave Wright Street.

Tractor Lease – John Deere: City Manager Ogburn presented three competitive quotes for a new tractor to replace an aging 2018 Kubota in need of approximately $10,000 in repairs and carrying 8,000 hours of use. Quotes were received from John Deere, Kubota, and Takeuch. While Kubota's base price appeared more competitive at a glance, City Manager Ogburn recommended the John Deere option based on the superiority of its service and maintenance program. Key advantages of the John Deere proposal included on-site servicing, a guaranteed 24-hour response time for repairs, and the provision of a loaner unit if the equipment cannot be repaired in the field. Kubota, by contrast, requires the city to transport the equipment and assumes responsibility for all maintenance costs under the lease. The proposed arrangement is a five-year capital lease at approximately $1,600 per month, reflecting an estimated usage of 500–600 hours per year. It was also noted that John Deere was the only vendor willing to bring a loaner model to the city for a trial period prior to the decision. The city currently operates John Deere equipment, providing additional familiarity with the brand.

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Item 11. **Consideration for New Tractor**

Motion to approve the John Deere tractor quote on a five-year lease was made by Councilman Andrew Murphy and seconded by Councilman Jeremy Madden. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 12. **Final Comments:**

Councilman Andrew Murphy shared a personal announcement that he and his wife are expecting a child.

Public Comment – Linda Barnes (Springview Height Resident): Ms. Barnes addressed the Mayor and Council regarding concerns about unsanctioned block parties in the Springview Height neighborhood. She expressed concern for public safety, citing issues with large crowds of 400–500 attendees from outside the community, vehicles blocking sidewalks and intersections, and a lack of food service permits and police notification. Ms. Barnes requested that the city post signage in the community to inform residents of the permitting requirements and prohibitions on unpermitted block parties. She emphasized that her primary concern was the safety of community members and police officers called to manage unruly events.

Mayor Umbehant acknowledged the concern and clarified that closing public roads requires a formal application process. He noted that the legal question centers on activities occurring on private property, and asked City Attorney Jay Doss to weigh in. Attorney Doss explained that on private property, enforcement would be tied to violations such as noise ordinances, alcohol-related infractions, or other municipal law violations. Deputy Police Chief Daniel Carson confirmed that patrol officers cover the city's streets multiple times during each 12-hour shift.

Mayor Umbehant directed City Attorney Doss to research the matter further and asked Deputy Police Chief Carson to compile relevant incident statistics. He indicated that the council would use that information to determine what signage or other measures would be appropriate.

Public Comment – Judy Erwin (49 Wright Street, New Resident): Ms. Erwin introduced herself as a recent arrival to Lavonia. She raised several concerns and observations:

Speed Limit Signage on Wright Street: Ms. Erwin noted that there is only one speed limit sign on Wright Street, located near a curve, and that there is no sign at the street's entrance from the main highway. She reported that speeding traffic had caused her to nearly be struck twice while backing out of her driveway and asked the council to consider adding signage or speed breakers, particularly ahead of the planned repaving.

Creek Maintenance: Ms. Erwin reported that a creek running behind her property is overgrown and in need of maintenance, contributing to issues with snakes and mosquitoes. She noted that her HOA representative directed her to the city regarding

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responsibility for the waterway. Mayor Umbehant identified it as district water and asked City Manager Ogburn to coordinate with the HOA to assess what action is needed.

Block Parties: Ms. Erwin expressed agreement with Ms. Barnes's concerns about block party safety.

Positive Feedback: Ms. Erwin praised the professionalism and friendliness of city staff, specifically commending Sandra and Leslie in the Water Department, and expressed enthusiasm for the community and its events, including her attendance at the most recent Music on Main.

Water Quality: Ms. Erwin commented favorably on the quality of the city's water, noting no sediment.

Item 13. **Adjourn:**

Prior to adjournment, City Attorney Jay Doss noted for housekeeping purposes that a formal motion was needed to amend the agenda to include consideration of the tractor lease, which had been discussed under the City Manager's Report.

Motion to amend the agenda for consideration of the tractor was made by Councilman Jeremy Madden and seconded by Councilman Michael Schulman. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Umbehant adjourned the meeting at 6:04 P.M.

Upcoming Meetings:

June 22, 2026 – Work Session (If needed)

July 6, 2026 – City of Lavonia – Regular Council Meeting @ 5:30 P.M.

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Courtney Umbehant, Mayor Barbara Busby, Assistant City Clerk