

**City Council of the City of Greenville
Work Session – Annual Retreat**

**Thursday, February 12, 2026
8:30 a.m.**

**Meeting Location:
Greenville Transit Authority, 205 Arcadia Drive**

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL: Mayor Knox White; Councilmembers John M. DeWorken, Lillian B. Flemming, Ken Gibson, Wil Brasington, Tina Belge, and Dorothy Dowe

CITY STAFF: City Manager Shannon Lavrin; City Attorney Leigh Paoletti; City Clerk Camilla G. Pitman

Mayor White called the meeting to order for the purpose of discussing the following matters.

Welcome, Introduction and Overview, presented by City Manager Shannon Lavrin

Ms. Lavrin welcomed everyone to the retreat and provided an overview of the City of Greenville, as provided in the presentation, sharing demographics for the City as provided by ESRI. Ms. Lavrin provided trends of information and specifically shared the following: 79,205 population, 10% percent growth since 2020, 2.0 Average Household Size, 38,284 Households, 2,555 people per square mile, 153,000 daytime population, 35.9 median age, \$475,470 median home value with 38% percent of income going towards home ownership, 4% percent unemployment rate, \$76,647 medium household income, and 17% percent poverty rate based on \$32,000, among other information.

Ms. Lavrin presented City Council's priorities and asked for an opportunity to re-evaluate the five priorities and to affirm those priorities at the end of the retreat. Ms. Lavrin shared the priorities that include: (1) Public Safety and Engagement, (2) Mobility and Transportation, Recreation, (3) Open Spaces, and Sustainability, (4) Neighborhoods and Affordable Housing, and (5) Economic Development.

Ms. Lavrin stated the City is in excellent financial health and that she anticipates moderate revenue growth for General Fund, moderate revenue growth for accommodations and hospitality taxes, and funding requests for technology and supporting balanced growth. Ms. Lavrin also stated that Greenville continues to be the only municipality with an AAA rating in the state, that the City is on target to meet current revenue projects in all areas and to finish on budget, and that there is no millage increase recommended for FY27. Ms. Lavrin added that the City has created a public finance plan to support large generational projects and that the fund balance policy continues to maintain a minimum reserve of 20% percent at all times.

Ms. Lavrin provided the following 2025 Key Achievements:

- Reduced permit review times to increase housing and economic development
- Downtown nightlife management
- Trail network expansion
- Updated GVL2040 Comprehensive Plan
- Major facility and park projects
- Greenville Zoo Strategic Plan
- Traffic Management Center and ITS Master Plan

- Infrastructure and traffic improvements
- Downtown enhancements
- GCEDC transformation
- Public Works infrastructure and investment
- Financial management

Regarding FY27 considerations, Ms. Lavrin suggested the following: (1) artificial intelligence (AI), (2) continued construction pricing concerns, and (3) uncertainty about tax incentives and project financing. Ms. Lavrin also suggested alley improvement projects and The Village wayfinding signage for the business corridor.

Ms. Lavrin shared the agenda for the rest of the day and shared the focus and goals of the retreat. Ms. Lavrin asked for Council to consider the following throughout the retreat: (1) Are Council priorities the same as when last adopted in 2023; (2) Is staff achieving Council's long-term vision and intended outcomes; and (3) how well is staff reporting and communicating on its progress with Council priorities. Ms. Lavrin requested Council's guidance on staff's program progress.

GVL2040 5-Year Update: Missing Middle Housing, presented by Planning and Development Director Mary Douglas Hirsch and Principal Development Planner Michael Frixen

Ms. Hirsch and Mr. Frixen shared a Five-Year Progress Update on the GVL2040 Comprehensive Plan and conducted discussions involving Missing Middle Housing, as provided in the presentation. Mr. Frixen provided an update and overview of GVL2040 and policy recommendations for open space, transportation and mobility, economic development, and affordable housing. Council shared comments regarding nodes, density, traffic, affordable housing and open space preservation.

Ms. Hirsch shared information regarding missing middle housing and stated that house-scale buildings with multiple units are currently not being built. Ms. Hirsch provided examples of homes currently built and examples of middle housing homes. Ms. Hirsch presented opportunities for supporting and advancing missing middle housing. Mr. Frixen provided recommendations for streamlining rezoning requests into neighborhoods. Council shared comments regarding the information presented and expressed their opinions.

Break: City Council recessed for a 10 minute break and reconvened the meeting.

Ready for Takeoff: Wheels Up, Greenville's New Wheelsports Park, presented by Project Management Director Jeff Waters, Senior Capital Projects Manager Calin Owens, and PORT Urbanism Sean McKay

Mr. Waters shared an overview of the new Wheelsports Park to be located at the Greenville Downtown Airport and introduced Shawn McKay with PORT Urbanism, who shared a timeline and project context regarding the location and conditions of the property, as provided in the presentation. Mr. McKay provided information regarding input from community stakeholders and concepts of the proposed site designs, including the Bean, the Bend, and the Bar. Capital Projects Manager Calin Owens advised that construction is scheduled for early 2027, with an anticipated opening in early 2028. Council shared comments regarding the information presented and expressed their opinions.

Greenville Police Department presented by Chief Howie Thompson

Chief Thompson shared information regarding the Police Department's strategic progress regarding crime prevention, referring to statistics from the years 2000, 2020, and 2025, as provided in the presentation. Chief Thompson advised that crime is at its lowest in 25 years and recognized the hard work in achieving the reduction. Chief Thompson also advised that crime has dropped due to presence and prevention, training and equipment, and data driven operations. Chief Thompson recognized the importance of community engagement and referenced to events and neighborhood meetings the Police Officers participate in. Moving forward, Chief Thompson requested consideration in establishing a Real-Time Crime Center to centralize and sync all of the data streams to assist law enforcement with its work and resources. Council shared comments regarding the information presented and expressed their support for the Police Department.

Break: City Council recessed for a 15 minute lunch break and reconvened the meeting.

From Blueprint to Approval: Permitting and Plan Review presented by Building Codes and Property Maintenance Director Buddy Skinner

Mr. Skinner shared an update on permitting and planning, as provided in the presentation, and stated his department has processed more permit applications, more permits, and more inspections than ever before. Mr. Skinner commented on project valuations and fees collected in 2025, and he advised that permits issued for Hurricane Helene repairs were not charged fees. As a follow up from last year's retreat request, Mr. Skinner provided a comparison in the reduction of days for the review process and stated all reviewing divisions have reduced their average review days. Mr. Skinner advised that he would be requesting funds in the FY27 budget for funding permitting software to improve manual processing, conducting a permit fee analysis, and increasing staffing. Council shared comments regarding the information presented and expressed their opinions.

Building a Safer Tomorrow: Updates and Future Plans for the Greenville Fire Department presented by Chief Brian Horton, Assistant Fire Chief Francis Crosby, and Division Chief Tristan Johnson

Chief Horton, Chief Crosby and Chief Johnson shared information on the following items, as provided in the presentation, (1) Analysis of incident and response information, (2) Opioid response team, (3) Expansion of medical services and responses, (4) Office of Fire Marshal and Community Risk Mitigation and Engagement, and (5) future outreach and efforts.

Chief Horton presented information regarding the expansion of medical response and quick response vehicle services and the Department's transition to Advanced Life Support and the staffing of EMTs and Paramedics to provide faster response to medical emergencies and the ability to provide medical assistance on the scene usually provided by Greenville County EMS or the hospitals. Chief Horton advised that the City can perform all of the medical services except for patient transport. Chief Horton stated that future plans include providing rapid care to officers and civilians on SWAT calls and providing treatment to patients exposed to hazardous chemicals and individuals removed from structure fires.

Chief Johnson presented a new initiative for Demolition/Blasting safety with developing a joint permit approval by the Fire Marshal's Office and Engineering.

Chief Horton presented information regarding station repairs and upgrades, including future replacement recommendations for a new Station 8 for District 2 and 4, replacement of Station 2 (West End), Station 5 (Pleasantburg), and Station 6, (Pelham Road).

Council shared comments regarding the information presented and expressed their opinions.

Building Beauty: Enhancing Cityscapes through Façade Improvements presented by Planning Assistant Deanna Ensley

Ms. Ensley shared information regarding the façade enhancement program, as provided in the presentation. Ms. Ensley commented on the program beginning in 2009 for the Pleasantburg Commercial Corridor and the evolution of the program that was relaunched May 1, 2025. Ms. Ensley provided a list of eligible expenses for façade improvements, the program structure of standard, preferred, and downtown commercial corridor, and a list of corridor highlights including 14 approved projects, \$295,707 initial funds available, and \$272,400 funds awarded/approved. Ms. Ensley also provided a list of ongoing projects and the businesses for those properties. Ms. Ensley shared that the program was transferred from Economic Development to the Planning Department and stated that the applications have closed due to the lack of funding allocated for FY2026. Ms. Ensley advised that the Planning Department supplemented the project with \$100,000 from its own budget this past year and emphasized the need for appropriating funds. Council shared comments regarding the information presented and expressed their opinions.

People, Spaces, and Experiences: A Five-Year Review and Future Outlook for Parks, Recreation and Tourism presented by Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Will Young, PRT Deputy Director Victoria Iriel, and Urban Forester Drew Smith

Mr. Young shared a five year review and future outlook of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, implementing its theme of people, spaces, and experiences, as provided in the presentation. Mr. Young reviewed the restructuring of the PRT Department, technology advances, donor funding program, and Arts in Public Places exhibits and investments. Mr. Young provided an update on parks, recreation, tourism, trees, and a five-year look ahead.

Ms. Iriel shared an update regarding the PRT Master Plan, including the timeline, facility and program review, needs assessment, public engagement, mission/vision, and the goal of every resident being able to connect to a park within a 10 minute walk. Ms. Iriel advised that they anticipate final approval of the Master Plan by the end of 2026. Ms. Iriel also shared information regarding the CAPRA Accreditation and stated the objective is to complete accreditation by Fall 2027. Ms. Iriel commented on facilities, parks, recreation, and tourism, and she recognized the 100th anniversary of Cleveland Park.

Regarding the tree ordinance, Ms. Iriel commented on Greenville's Urban Forest Comprehensive Plan and the process of finalizing the plan. Mr. Smith provided an overview of the tree canopy over the past five years and discussed tree planting and the tree fund balance, which is currently \$843,619. Council shared comments regarding the information presented and expressed their opinions.

Break: City Council recessed for a 10 minute break and reconvened the meeting.

Nurturing Nature: Greenville Zoo's Commitment to Education, Conservation, and Research presented by Greenville Zoo Director Bill Cooper, Greenville Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Nick Kapustin, Greenville Zoo Education Curator Stephanie Bradley, and Assistant General Curator Christine Dear

Mr. Cooper shared an overview of the Greenville Zoo and future objectives, as provided in the presentation. Ms. Bradley provided an overview of educational opportunities at the Zoo including onsite programs, community engagement, volunteers and impact on the Zoo. Dr. Kapustin provided information regarding the Conservation Plan, including green practices, on-site

conversation programming, and quarters for conservation. Dr. Kapustin commented on the SAFE program which is an AZA initiative that protects species threatened with extinction. Ms. Dear commented on the breeding programs and its impact on the Zoo. Dr. Kapustin referred to the research performed and the studies that are performed at the Zoo. Council shared comments regarding the information provided and expressed their opinions.

Councilmember DeWorken implored the City to pursue the addition of a Carrousel at the Zoo.

Day One Wrap-Up presented by Ms. Lavrin

Ms. Lavrin referred to takeaways from today including trends on population and traffic enforcement, fund priorities in GVL2040, technology to take us to the next level, and maintaining a positive view of the City while continuing to improve and move ahead. Ms. Lavrin shared the scheduled for Friday morning and advised that Council would begin with an executive session.

With no further discussions, City Council recessed for the day at 4:32 p.m., scheduled to reconvene on Friday morning.

Camilla G. Pitman, MMC, Certified PLS
City Clerk

Meeting notice posted on February 11, 2026, at 7:15 a.m.