

CITY OF TALLADEGA
WORK SESSION
July 28, 2025 – 5:00pm

Council President Sims deferred to Donnie Miller and Chuck Branch for a presentation. Chuck Branch, representing NextSite out of Birmingham, provided an overview of the company's retail recruitment services. He explained that NextSite partners with municipalities across the Southeast to identify market gaps and recruit appropriate retailers. The company uses consumer analytics, including mobile device data, to analyze retail patterns, demographics, and spending behaviors in the area. They compare Talladega to similar markets in the Southeast to attract expanding retailers. Mr. Branch highlighted that NextSite inventories available properties in the city and actively represents the community at national retail conferences. He noted their experience working in nearby cities such as Lincoln, Sylacauga, and Alexander City. The company's services range from recruiting small businesses like drive-thru coffee shops to redeveloping large retail spaces. Their compensation model is performance-based, with a small upfront retainer and additional fees tied to successful recruitment efforts.

Council President Sims asked if Mr. Branch had reviewed data specific to Talladega. Mr. Branch responded that his team briefly analyzed the area that morning and identified several retail concepts that could be viable based on similar markets in Georgia, Mississippi, and the Florida Panhandle. He noted that income levels were higher than expected and mobility data indicated a larger trade area than the city limits. He also referenced traffic patterns around Walmart and other shopping centers.

City Manager Swanson asked about the next steps. Mr. Branch said the next step would be to submit a preliminary proposal for the city's consideration and to follow up as needed to answer questions or participate in a work session. He noted that his schedule would be full over the next few months due to industry conferences.

Councilman Dickerson asked if NextSite works directly with vendors seeking to place retail in specific areas, in addition to contract-driven recruitment. Mr. Branch confirmed that this is part of their process. He explained that there are currently about seven tenant rep firms operating in Alabama, representing roughly 80 retailers. NextSite begins by notifying their network of developers and tenant reps about interest in Talladega to identify potential matches. Councilman Dickerson also asked whether residents interested in purchasing a franchise could be included in this process. Mr. Branch responded that NextSite does not typically engage at the individual franchisee level but would coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce to support local efforts. He emphasized that their role focuses on using data and analytics to recruit retail to the market, which can support franchise development. City Manager Swanson stated he would like to sit down and review the information thoroughly.

Mr. Branch stated he would be happy to provide a more detailed proposal and anticipated it would prompt additional questions. Council President Sims asked about the upfront cost. Mr. Branch explained that their model includes a small annual retainer of \$15,000 with a three-year minimum commitment. Success fees would apply during the initial three-year term and an additional three years thereafter.

Council President Sims asked if grant opportunities were considered as part of the process. Mr. Branch responded that while they can explore grants, it is not something they have done extensively. He noted that many grant programs are currently under federal review and funding has been delayed. He stated he would send an electronic version of the proposal to Donnie Miller for distribution to the Council.

Council President Sims also asked if the services offered by NextSite would duplicate any existing efforts. Mr. Branch explained that Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce could use the data provided to support their current initiatives. Council Member Spratlin asked if Main Street would be the primary point of contact. Mr. Branch clarified that the City would be the main client and point of contact. Main Street would be a recipient of the analytics to support their work, but NextSite does not focus on recruiting small businesses, with the exception of occasionally identifying regional retailers such as pizza or coffee shops.

**CITY OF TALLADEGA
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
July 28, 2025 – 5:30pm**

The City Council of the City of Talladega met in a regular meeting on Monday, July 28, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in the Talladega City Hall Chambers. The meeting was called to order and the following were present: Council President Hugh Sims, Councilman Steve Dickerson, Council Member Vickey Hall, Council Member Betty Spratlin, City Manager Derrick Swanson, and Mayor Ashton Hall.

Moment of Silence.

Motion by Council Member Spratlin with a second from Council President Sims for the approval of the amended agenda. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Motion by Council Member Hall with a second from Council Member Spratlin to approve invoices and expenditures. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Total Invoices & Expenditures from 7/4/2025-7/17/2025		\$405,751.52
General Fund	153,325.69	
Corrections Fund	27,192.20	
Municipal Airport	23,457.99	
Capital Projects Trust Fund	201,775.64	

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Council Member Spratlin for the approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting on July 14, 2025. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Debora Nobles, chapter leader of the East Alabama Chapter of Parents of Murdered Children (POMC), addressed the Council. She shared her personal story following the 2021 murder of her son, Christian McKinley Nobles, and how she became involved with POMC, a national nonprofit organization offering support to families affected by homicide. She and her husband, Bernard Noble, lead the first POMC chapter in Alabama, which serves several counties in East Alabama. The chapter holds monthly support group meetings on the second Saturday of each month in Hobson City. Several Talladega residents, including Adessa Pruitt and Cecilia Morris, are active in the group and serve on the board. Ms. Nobles noted that the chapter is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and occasionally hosts events. The next event, the National Day of Remembrance vigil, will be held on September 20 in Anniston. She encouraged Council Members and the public to attend and support their efforts.

Council President Sims thanked Ms. Nobles and noted that the brochures provided included donation information. Councilman Dickerson asked how many members of the chapter were from Talladega or Talladega County. Ms. Nobles responded that approximately six members are from the county.

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Council Member Spratlin to reappoint Joel Elliott to the Industrial Development Board. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Council President Sims deferred to Dr. Samuel Roberson for the third quarter update from the Talladega County Extension Office. Dr. Roberson, County Extension Director, provided an overview of the mission and work of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, noting its connection to Auburn University and Alabama A&M. He emphasized the organization’s inclusive programming and efforts to extend research-based knowledge to the public. Dr. Roberson highlighted several recent and ongoing programs in Talladega, including 4-H activities, food safety education (with sessions taught in Spanish), home gardening support, diabetes and nutrition programs, and financial literacy workshops. He noted the hiring of a new staff member focused on outreach to low-income families and pregnant teens, including SNAP education programs, which are set to end in September due to federal changes. He encouraged collaboration with city officials and residents to meet local needs and announced upcoming programs such as 4-H performing arts sessions, a forestry management workshop, and a fall “Pumpkin and Poetry” event featuring an author who has written about early 20th-century women in extension programs.

Council President Sims commented that he had participated in the nutrition and diet program and found it very beneficial. Dr. Roberson added that the programs listed represent only a portion of their outreach efforts and emphasized their presence in the community through initiatives such as Diaper Row and local food distributions. He expressed appreciation to City Council Members who contributed to the recent kitchen renovation at their facility and thanked them for their continued support.

City Attorney O'Brien explained that the Talladega Redevelopment Authority (TRA) operates independently from the City Council. Council President Sims noted that the City can surplus property and transfer it to the TRA, which can then sell or lease it at their discretion. Attorney O'Brien confirmed and added that the TRA is charged by statute with redeveloping property within a designated project area focused on industrial, economic, and commercial development. He stated that it may be easier for the City to carry out certain development projects through the TRA due to constitutional limitations on municipal powers.

Council Member Hall asked if the Council would have any further involvement once property is transferred. Attorney O'Brien clarified that the Council would not have control or decision-making authority after the transfer. Council Member Spratlin stated that the Council must approve any transfer of property to the TRA. Attorney O'Brien confirmed that the Council must elect to transfer property, either by sale or donation, and the TRA then decides what to do with it. He added that the Council also designates who will serve on the TRA and for what term. Council Member Hall then asked if the TRA has bylaws, and Attorney O'Brien responded that it does not. Council Member Hall inquired about the status of bylaws for the Redevelopment Authority. Charlie Diggs responded that the authority does not currently have bylaws. He explained that the board was formed approximately four years ago, with members appointed at that time, primarily to facilitate the transfer of funds to Main Street. Since then, a board member was lost, and efforts are underway to re-establish the board. Diggs emphasized that this is not a new board but one that has been in place for several years. Council Member Hall expressed the need for bylaws to be established, to which Diggs replied that they have not yet had the opportunity to develop them. City Attorney O'Brien explained that the municipal corporation is created by state statute, with its powers and governance typically outlined in bylaws as dictated by law. While he was unable to cite a specific code section during the meeting, he offered to email a relevant portion of the Alabama Code and provide the authority's operating procedures for review. Councilman Dickerson then clarified that even after the Redevelopment Authority is seated, the city is not required to transfer any properties until the City Council is satisfied that all necessary rules and procedures are established. Attorney O'Brien agreed with this point, and Councilman Dickerson stressed the importance of ensuring everything is properly organized and in order before moving forward.

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Council Member Spratlin to appoint William A. Meacham, Sarah "Bry" Daves, and Ken Allen Jr. to the Talladega Redevelopment Board. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Council Member Spratlin to appoint William A. Meacham to the Heritage Hall Commission. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Mayor Hall swears in William A. Meacham, Sarah "Bry" Daves, and Ken Allen Jr. to the Talladega Redevelopment Authority.

Mayor Hall swears in William A. Meacham to the Heritage Hall Commission.

Ordinance #1958 amending Ordinance No. 1882, as amended by ordinances heretofore adopted, said ordinance, and the amendments related thereto, being entitled, "Talladega, Alabama, Zoning Ordinance," as follows, and in no other particulars

Motion by Council Member Spratlin with a second from Council President Sims for the Reading of the Heading Only. Roll Call. AYES: All.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1882, AS AMENDED BY ORDINANCES HERETOFORE ADOPTED, SAID ORDINANCE, AND THE AMENDMENTS RELATED THERETO, BEING ENTITLED, "TALLADEGA, ALABAMA, ZONING ORDINANCE," AS FOLLOWS, AND IN NO OTHER PARTICULARS

Motion by Council Member Spratlin with a second from Council President Sims for Immediate Consideration of Ordinance #1958. Roll Call. AYES: Council President Sims, Council Member Hall, and Council Member Spratlin ABSTAIN: Councilman Dickerson *Failed for lack of unanimous consent. Ordinance will be placed for adoption at the next regular meeting.*

Ordinance #1959 amending Ordinance No. 1948 the official annual budget for the City of Talladega, Alabama, in part, for the fiscal year beginning 1 October 2024 and ending 30 September 2025

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Council Member Spratlin for the Reading of the Heading Only. Roll Call. AYES: All.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1948 THE OFFICIAL ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF TALLADEGA, ALABAMA, IN PART, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING 1 OCTOBER 2024 AND ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2025.

Motion by Council Member Spratlin with a second from Council President Sims for Immediate Consideration of Ordinance #1959. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Council Member Spratlin for the Adoption of Ordinance #1959. Roll Call. AYES: Council President Sims and Council Member Spratlin NAYS: Council Member Hall ABSTAIN: Councilman Dickerson *Motion failed.*

Travel Requests

Resolution #6322 approving the travel request for Shaneeka Phillips, Andrea Karen Black, and Duane Player to attend CGAT Training on July 30, 2025 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Resolution #6323 approving the travel request for Timothy Wood to attend Alabama Speedball: Recognizing Stimulant and Narcotic Impairment class on September 11, 2025 in Fultondale, Alabama

Resolution #6324 approving the travel request for Timothy Wood to attend Mental Health for First Responders class on November 5, 2025 in Fultondale, Alabama

Resolution #6325 approving the travel request for Nick Barnett, Quonterious Hill, Seth Searcy, Allen Cavender, Patrick Triplett, Austin Wood, Chris Travis to attend Roadside Interview Class on August 7, 2025 in Moody, Alabama

Resolution #6326 approving the travel request for Angela Thomas and Anna Eliuk to attend Southern Software Public Safety Users Conference 2025 on October 26, 2025 to October 31, 2025 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Resolution #6333 approving a travel request for Lt. Dennis McDaniel and Acting Police Chief Ron McElrath to attend the Southern Law Enforcement Development Seminar on October 20, 2025 to October 24, 2025 in Opelika, Alabama

Motion by Council Member Spratlin with a second from Councilman Dickerson for the approval of Resolution #6233 to Resolution #6326 and Resolution #6333. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Weed Abatement Liens

Resolution #6327 assessing a weed abatement lien on property located at 110 East Damon Ave.

Resolution #6328 assessing a weed abatement lien on property located at 514 East St. South

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Councilman Dickerson for the approval of Resolution #6327 and Resolution #6328. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Resolution #6329 approving an agreement for service with East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission for the Areawide Community Transportation System (ACTS)

Motion by Councilman Dickerson with a second from Council Member Spratlin for the approval of Resolution #6329. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Resolution #6330 approving an agreement with All Year Sports Galaxy LLC for the rental of synthetic ice rink for Christmas on the Square at a cost of \$13,736.00

Motion by Councilman Dickerson with a second from Council Member Spratlin for the approval of Resolution #6330. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Resolution #6331 approving an agreement with Deborah's Party Rentals & Your Alabama Wedding for the rental of a bounce castle and train for Christmas on the Square at a cost of \$3,071.43

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Councilman Dickerson for the approval of Resolution #6331. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Resolution #6332 approving the surplus of five (5) vehicles from the Police Department and Airport

Motion by Council President Sims with a second from Councilman Dickerson for the approval of Resolution #6332. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Motion by Council Member Hall with a second by Council Member Spratlin to approve invoices and expenditures for the Water Department. Roll Call. AYES: All.

Water Department Expenditures for 7/4/2025 to 7/17/2025**\$63,128.41**

Water/Sewer Fund

63,128.41

City Manager Swanson noted that it is time to schedule another City Informational session. He referenced materials related to the Red Cross that were available at the meeting and mentioned that the organization has previously provided valuable information to him, the Police Chief, Mr. Pointer, and Captain Curtis. He shared that the Red Cross is looking to recruit additional volunteers and currently has only one individual in Talladega County who is authorized to initiate financial assistance during emergencies. During the upcoming City Informational on Wednesday, they will discuss how to move forward with identifying a second qualified person within the county. This would ensure that, if an emergency occurs, someone locally is able to initiate the financial process without relying on someone from outside the area. Additional related topics are also expected to be covered.

Mayor Hall acknowledged the good turnout and expressed hope for another strong showing at the upcoming City Informational session. He thanked City Manager Swanson and everyone involved in organizing the event and appreciated the opportunity to take the lead in spearheading it. He encouraged all to attend so they can receive important information and added that it is always a pleasure to see everyone and recognize their hard work.

Council Member Hall expressed ongoing concern about the state of the Community Appearance Department, acknowledging that she may sound repetitive for bringing it up every week. She shared that she had just learned on Friday that there is currently no active litter crew and emphasized the importance of having workers out picking up trash. She pointed out that these employees are being paid only \$9 an hour while working in extreme heat, risking heat stroke, and noted that it's understandable some would leave for similar wages at places like McDonald's. She further remarked that some staff have been with the City for 14 or 15 years and still aren't making \$15 an hour, while others in air-conditioned offices earn significantly more. She stressed that the City must have personnel in place to maintain the community's cleanliness and appearance.

Council President Sims asked if inmate labor could be used for any of the community appearance tasks. City Manager Swanson confirmed that it could. Council Member Hall asked why inmate labor was not currently being utilized in the field. Council President Sims said he did not have an answer to that question. Council Member Hall noted that while littering cannot be completely stopped, cleanup efforts are necessary, sharing that her husband had spent the last two weeks picking up trash along Broadway. Council President Sims inquired whether Director Pointer was using inmate labor for roadside trash pickup. Director Pointer explained that the City has a budget for eight state inmates, who are primarily assigned to grass cutting due to staffing shortages. He added that while litter pickup is done on Fridays, the crew cannot keep up with the volume. Council President Sims acknowledged Hall's concerns.

Council Member Hall stated that one of her short-term goals is to secure a raise for the employees so they can be retained. City Manager Swanson responded that while pay classification and raises are important short-term goals, these changes take time. He assured the Council that the administration is fully aware of the issue and is diligently working on it. However, any adjustments would need to wait until next year's budget cycle. He also explained that this is a challenge he inherited, with many employees currently being underpaid. He promised that a proposal would be presented soon and emphasized the importance of ensuring all details are carefully addressed to make the raises sustainable. He stressed that the City does not want to implement increases that it cannot maintain financially, but the goal is to bring wages to a feasible level so employees are fairly compensated and retained. He next commented the upcoming proposal will show specific categories and address pay for those who have been with the City for many years.

Council President Sims inquired about the status of the job descriptions for the Chief of Police and the Director of the Community Services Department, asking whether they have been finalized and advertised. City Manager Swanson responded that everything is currently being finalized.

Council President Sims asked where things currently stand in the process. City Manager Swanson replied that he would leave that to the Human Resources Department but noted that they had discussed it earlier that day. He stated that the job description for the Community Services Director has been finalized, with the Police Chief position close behind. Sims acknowledged that there are already applications to review.

Councilman Dickerson greeted everyone and extended a good evening to his colleagues and to Summer. He shared that he recently learned the Recreation Department, under her leadership, is planning a back-to-school extravaganza and commended her and her staff for their efforts in organizing the event.

Motion by Councilman Dickerson with a second from Council President Sims to contribute \$3,900.00 (\$1,200 from Councilman Dickerson, \$1,200 from Council President Sims, \$1,500 from Council Member Hall) from their discretionary fund for the Parks and Recreation Back to School event. Roll Call. AYES: Council President Sims, Councilman Dickerson, and Council Member Hall NAY: Council Member Spratlin

Councilman Dickerson shared that the Recreation Department is currently accepting applications and actively promoting youth programs including flag football, football, cheerleading for ages three and up, and soccer. He emphasized the importance of supporting recreation and youth activities within the City of Talladega, noting that while many say the youth have nothing to do, city officials are working to create more opportunities. He added that if cost or transportation is a barrier, he is personally willing to step in to help, which is why he dedicates his Saturday mornings to promoting youth involvement.

He also thanked Debora Nobles and her husband for their presentation, acknowledging that it was difficult for him to sit through as someone who also lost a sibling to violence. He expressed his appreciation for the message and its impact.

Councilman Dickerson further addressed department heads, including Director Pointer and the Water Department, urging them to ensure employees who work outside remain hydrated and are given necessary heat breaks. He stressed the importance of looking out for employee well-being during extreme temperatures. He closed by thanking all City employees for their service and congratulating those who had recently been appointed.

Council Member Spratlin stated that she is glad progress is being made on employee-related matters and expressed her desire to see continued movement on that as soon as possible. She thanked City Manager Swanson, the Fire Chief, and the Police Department for their assistance in addressing the issue of log trucks traveling down Willman Road. She noted that Willman Road has been one of her long-term projects, particularly concerning the bridge, and emphasized that heavy log trucks should not be crossing it. She expressed appreciation to the Police Department for taking action and to City Manager Swanson for facilitating the placement of signage prohibiting truck traffic. She then asked City Manager Swanson for an update on the status of Whitson Road, which they had previously visited to assess. City Manager Swanson responded that Whitson Road is extremely long and has not been paved, making it a significant project. He explained that the City will soon present a comprehensive plan outlining every street within city limits, including their current condition and whether they require paving, sealing, or other improvements. While the plan will be provided, the appropriation of funding and prioritization of streets will be left to the City Council. He noted that Whitson Road would require a substantial investment if selected, but acknowledged that the work is necessary. He also added that a preliminary draft budget is being developed in coordination with the Finance Director and will be available soon. He emphasized the importance of the Council coming together as a body to review the street plan and make decisions ward by ward. He also commented that he would work with Director Pointer to explore what immediate steps might be taken to help address the condition of Whitson Road.

Council Member Spratlin stated that she is receiving phone calls daily from five to six residents about the condition of Whitson Road and asked how she should respond to them. She asked if City Manager Swanson would be getting with Director Pointer to address the issue. City Manager Swanson confirmed that he and Director Pointer would meet to discuss possible solutions and determine what can be done to help alleviate the concerns, including providing recommendations. Council Member Spratlin offered to share the phone number of a resident in the area. City Manager Swanson acknowledged the complaints and noted that there are concerns about other streets as well.

Council President Sims asked if the City would be eligible for any Rebuild Alabama funding. City Manager Swanson responded that the City is currently in the process and is working on grants related to the Rebuild Alabama Act. He mentioned a recent meeting with ALDOT regarding potential grant opportunities and noted that prospects are looking favorable for several projects. One area of focus includes improving sidewalk accessibility from the downtown area, as there is currently no continuous sidewalk connection from the City Square to Walmart. Council President Sims asked if the project would begin at AIDB and the square, to which City Manager Swanson replied that it would. He added that everything necessary for the project has already been brought before the Council, and they are now waiting on the state to move forward with their part.


Council President Sims shared a few comments, beginning by congratulating the Police Chief and the Police Department for their successful apprehension of the individuals involved in the recent homicides on Shocco Road. He expressed his appreciation for their work. He also reported that he, Councilman Dickerson, and City Manager Swanson met this past week with two County Commissioners to discuss efforts to restart animal control services. He noted that there are still outstanding funds owed to the City but felt the discussion was productive and that they will have to wait and see how it progresses.

Council Member Spratlin offered congratulations to the Talladega Redevelopment Authority and expressed her support, encouraging them to move forward with determination and do whatever it takes to begin making progress.

Motion by Councilman Dickerson with a second from Council Member Spratlin to adjourn the meeting. AYES: All.

AUTHENTICATION

I, Joanna Medlen, City Clerk of the City of Talladega, Alabama, do hereby attest that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the proceedings of the City Council of Talladega, Alabama, which met in a regular session on Monday, July 28, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the City of Talladega, Alabama City Hall Council Chambers.


Joanna Medlen, City Clerk