

Council Meetings Q & A

Q. What is the status of the City Hall building and Police Station on Broad Street and Joe Jerkins?

A. City Hall and Police Department Building Inspections Summary

This is a summary of inspections by the Austell Building Inspector and Fire Marshall.

The main

concerns of the building are the following:

- ADA standards (handicap accessibility) throughout both buildings are completely out of code. The public entrances, restrooms, and hallways as well as employee work areas are out of compliance.
- There are missing handrails on stairwells.
- There is an absence of ramps where needed.
- The electrical service throughout both buildings is not code compliant. There are low and high voltage wires running together, wiring not properly fastened, insulation on top of wiring and lights, open junction boxes with exposed wiring etc.
- There are fire code compliance issues such as emergency egress violations, emergency exit signs, and other life safety concerns.
- The HVAC systems and ductwork throughout both buildings were also found to be noncompliant. Clogged ductwork, undersized natural gas services to appliances, electrical services to appliances and appliance venting are all concerns.
- There are some structural concerns presented as well. The roof has many defects and areas that need constant attention to prevent leaks due to poor design. There are areas where the buildings were modified in the past that present some real concern.
- There are areas where the slab leaks after heavy rain.

Q. Are there any updates on a senior discount for Leaf & Limb?

A. To support our senior citizens of the City of Austell, the Public Works Department proposed a discount program of 50% or a fee reduction of \$7.50 for senior citizens ages sixty-five (65) or older for the removal of leaves, limbs, yard waste and bulk waste. The mayor and council voted on the change on Monday, April 7, 2025, and the program will go into effect May 1, 2025. The application to receive this discount can be found online at:

<https://www.cognitofirms.com/CityOfAustellGA/LeavesAndLimbsDiscountForm2>

Q. Is it fair to charge condominium, duplex, apartment, and townhome dwellers for Leaf & Limb pick-up?

A. OVERVIEW OF BULK WASTE AND LEAVE/LIMBS DISPOSAL FOR CONDOMINIUMS, DUPLEXES, APARTMENT BUILDINGS, AND TOWNHOMES IN THE CITY OF AUSTELL

When addressing leaves/ limbs and bulk waste for single-family dwellings such as townhomes and duplexes, it is the responsibility of the owner of the duplex or townhome to properly secure the services of a waste disposal services provider in conjunction with the community's homeowner association (HOA) when disposing of leaves/limbs and bulk waste.

Property maintenance management companies manage apartment buildings, townhomes,

and condominium communities' leaves/ limbs, and on occasion, bulk waste removal, as a "built-in service" of the HOA or lease agreement. In the Metro Atlanta area, the average cost to dispose of bulk waste by a specialized waste disposal service provider is \$18.60 to \$69.00 per cubic yard.

UPDATE: The Public Works Department provides leaves/limbs and bi-annual clean-up for the residents of Austell for \$15.00 per month. The city offers a 50% discount to:

1. Senior 65 years of age and older.

HOAs that utilize property management services to provide for the removal of leaves/limbs and or bi-annual clean-up can apply for a discount or removal from the leaves/limbs and bi-annual program. To receive a discount or removal from the program, the HOA or leasing agent will need to provide the Public Works Department following:

1. A copy of the association rules and regulations, a copy of the HOA's bi-laws, a copy of the HOA's property maintenance agreement, or all the above, that clearly identify that the leaves/limbs and bulk waste are a part of the property management service agreement.

The removal or reduction in fees will be applied upon approval of the Public Works Director and Mayor. No credits applied.

Q. Will there be a city-wide lighting assessment?

A. The Public Works Department is collaborating with Georgia Power on assessing the city's lighting infrastructure for commercial and residential city-wide. There are locations throughout the city with outdated light fixtures, and out light from the 2009 flood incident. Furthermore, we are also looking at areas citywide whereby residents have identified "dark areas" and assessing the addition of poles and lights.

Georgia Power has acknowledged that they are working to have the assessment completed by May 31, 2025.

UPDATE: Georgia Power has provided the Public Works Department with a proposed light fixture recommendation for the downtown area, throughout the city. Presently, we are waiting to receive a map from Georgia Power identifying "dark spaces" in the residential neighborhoods, throughout the city. All efforts are being made to get the map by the end of September 2025.

Q. Why were we four citizens [who attended the Second Budget Meeting] not invited to ask questions?

A. The purpose of the Budget Meeting is for Mayor, Council, and Directors to discuss the needs of the city. The budget meeting is planned according to the amount of time available for Mayor, Directors, and most importantly, to have a quorum of City Council members. For this reason, we must stay on schedule. Citizens are always welcome to submit questions either virtually (to Clerk@austellga.gov) or during Citizens Report during the Council Meeting.

Q. Has the decision been made to hire a City Manager? If so, why was this information not made public?

A. This issue has been discussed in Council meetings and although Mayor and Council agree that it would be ideal to hire a City Manager, the current form of government will have to first be changed. Once the form of government is changed, a City Manager MUST be hired, but since Property Tax increase was not approved by Council in 2024, there is no budget to fill this position, and the request to change the form of government was not sent to the State of Georgia.

UPDATE: The process of changing our form of government to hire a City Manager is underway. This request will go before the Georgia General Assembly session in January 2026.

Q. Will police come when the non-emergency number is dialed?

A. Citizens should dial 911 for any police response or to request a “meet with.” The non-emergency number is for administrative matters only, such as requesting a copy of a report or an update on an investigation.

The non-emergency number for the Police Department is 770-944-4320. Callers should follow the prompts to select the appropriate service. Our IT team will contact the PD phone vendor to confirm when calls are transferred to Cobb County if unanswered by the Austell PD station.

Q. Is there any possibility that some/many/all salaries could be reduced?

A. The City of Austell tries to remain competitive with other cities in the surrounding area, however, our pay is still lower, in many cases, than most. A “Pay and Compensation Study” is necessary to ensure that salaries are appropriate.

Q. Can Council recordings be placed on the website/ Are virtual meetings possible?

A. Although audio-only recordings will not be placed on the website, we are interested and gathering more information on webcasting Council Meetings.

Q. Are there any chances of getting 911 services back?

A. The City will not invest in city-run 911 services. Cobb County’s 911 service has been very effective.

Q. Should a business owner who also serves on City Council be allowed to bid on business in Austell?

A. Business owners who happen to be City Council members may bid on a property but should recuse themselves when there is a conflict of interest.

Q. Who paid for the Swearing-In Ceremony?

A. A private sponsor paid for the Council Member’s Swearing-In Ceremony. The sponsor and City Council members invited their guests, which included all City of Austell staff. In addition, there were pro bono Performances by Lyrica Holmes of Artz for the Harp and Neka Beckwith, as well as food service by Superior Catering.

Q. Who pays for the dumpster on Jefferson Street?

A. The City is committed to maintaining a clean, attractive, and welcoming downtown. As a part of this effort, the City will install a 15-yard trash compactor on Love Street and will adopt a new trash compactor ordinance for downtown properties located on Broad, Jefferson, Love and Spring Streets. We will also adopt Cobb County’s ordinance governing grease containers within the city limits. The monthly cost of the trash compactor which services downtown businesses will be shared amongst those companies using the compactor.

Q. What does the City of Austell charge for the buildings currently being used [by two nonprofit organizations] in Legion Park?

A. The Austell Community Collaborative, a group of local Faith-based leaders established under Mayor Jerkins, was instrumental, along with the business community, and Cobb Educators in the formation of the Austell Youth Innovation Center (2019) in an effort to improve test scores and graduation rates for the South Cobb High feeder schools through Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) programming. It was decided through this city partnership with the AYIC, use of the property would be set at \$ 1(one)dollar per month. Since it’s inception, the Austell Youth Innovation Center has produced a significant amount of success stories. including a future pilot! For more information please visit, www.austellyouthinnovationcenter.com.

In 2023, highly successful, with a track record of success in Cobb County, Cool Kids’ Committee Inc, a 501(3)non-profit organization approached the city in an effort to establish a headquarters in the former concession stand in Legion Park. The dilapidated structure was unusable as a concession stand, due to neglect from the previous organization’s usage, was non-building code compliant, and at this point was prone to vandalism, and homelessness. Cool Kids’ Committee presented an opportunity where the organization can bring in resources to fix up the property and run programming out of the building which could help the city achieve their stated Comprehensive Plan goal of, “Endorse Physical and Mental Well Being Among Citizens”. Today Cool Kids Committee Inc. offers mentors, tutors, educational support, community involvement opportunities, and physical fitness programs, to empower young people by improving self-confidence, and academic success all while providing a safe place from bullying, and a mental health resource from anyone in crisis in the park. For more information please visit, www.coolkidscommitteinc.org.

This item for discussion was presented at the June 14th, 2023, Parks Council Committee meeting. The committee was led by Chair Meredith Adams, with other committee members, Mayor Ollie Clemons, Council member Valerie Anderson, and Council member Deveon Myrick present. Chair Adams made the motion to approve a \$1(one)dollar per month rent, the motion was Seconded, by Council member Myrick. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Today Legion Park at Sweetwater Creek is the city of Austell’s most visited park!

Q. What is the status of the search for a City Manager?

A. As of March, 2026. The City of Austell Charter amendments are currently awaiting the Governor's approval.

Q. Is it necessary to increase the travel allowance for Council?

A. The current individual City Council training/travel budget of \$5,000.00 has remained fixed since 2015. Eleven years later, the cost of classes, conferences, and hotel stays have all increased. In this time, the *average hotel stay alone has increased approximately 30% since 2015, and according to the Georgia Municipal Association, the average cost of training has increased 32% from 2015 to 2026. To allow City Council members the opportunity to learn more about municipal governance, budgeting, and growth for our city, I recommend a travel/training budget increase of \$2,500.00 beginning the current fiscal year (2025-2026). The unused portion of this budget would be returned to the General Fund annually.

Q. Why are Zoning notices posted only up to three days prior?

A. The Process and Procedure is to advertise both in the Marietta Daily Journal legal notices for two weeks as well as posting a sign on the property at least 15 days prior to the hearing that a land use action is being requested. This is a requirement by the State of Georgia Zoning Procedures Law (O.C.G.A. § 36-66-4). Occasionally signs may blow down with winds or other external affects, and staff will see that and re-post the property which may make it seem like it was days.

Q. What happened to the gas reserves that could have been used two weeks ago when we had the uproar about increased prices?

A. Austell Gas did have reserves in place and those reserves were utilized during the unprecedented period towards the end of January. Austell Gas has since refunded the increase to citizens and will mitigate the cost, with minimal impact on residents.

Q. The February meeting notice in the MDJ listed the meeting that will be held on the first Monday of February will be held in the City Hall at 5000 Powder Springs Rd, when did the Threadmill become City Hall?

A. Although the Threadmill Complex currently serves as a hub for the majority of City of Austell business, the building has not been declared as "City Hall".

Q. Georgia Power is supposed to put up streetlights around the city, why don't they start with South Powder Springs Rd where there are none?

A. Georgia Power and Austell Public Works have discussed Austell Powder Springs Road "dark areas". Georgia Power recommends installation of (8) 120-watt LED area light fixtures. The plan to bring the additional lights for dark spots throughout the city will go before Mayor and Council on April 27th pre-agenda agenda.

Q. The new condos being developed in the city, will they have fire walls that extend through roof, so we don't have in Austell what they had in Dekalb County where one-unit catches on fire and the whole complex burns down?

A.

1. The term "Condominium" is not specifically spelled out in the code. It would fall under the category of multifamily "Residential Group R2." Assigning it to the correct category is key when determining the correct fire separation, and how that separation is achieved.
2. A condominium is considered commercial construction by the State of Georgia. Therefore, the International Building Code, (IBC), is the governing code.
3. Section 310.3 is the section that assigns the R2 designation for condominiums.
4. Next it must be determined what kind of separation is required. Table 707.3.10 requires a 2-hour separation using a "Fire Barrier." Please note this does not call for a "Fire Wall." A fire wall is an independent structure and is designed in such a way that if the building on both sides of the fire wall burned down, the fire wall would remain standing. A "Fire Barrier" compartmentalizes separating one occupancy from the other.
5. Also, in section (F) 420.4 an automatic sprinkler system is required.
6. It is important to note here that there is a definite distinction between townhomes, condo's, duplexes, and apartments. Townhomes and duplexes are regulated by the International Residential Code, (IRC). Townhome separation falls under section R302.2.4. And duplex separation falls under R 302.3. Townhomes are individually owned and require a 2-hour separation. This is accomplished by a 2-hour separation wall that can either extend to the underside of the roof decking, and fire-rated roof decking will extend 4 feet on each side of the 2-hour wall. Or, the use of a parapet that extends 30 inches above the roof can be implemented. See section R302.2.5 Parapet construction. The separation for a duplex requires a 1-hour separation. See section R302.3.

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