

**Athens Downtown Development Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, February 11, 2026  
2:00 p.m.  
ADDA Office, 250 W. Broad Street**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jeff Bishop, Drew Dekle, Kelly Girtz, Jason Leonard, and Andrew Ratcliffe

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Blake Aued, Will Fleenor, Linda Ford, Victoria Halilu, Diana Jackson, David Lynn, Greg Sowell, Rachel Swartz, and Allison Wright

1. Chairman Jason Leonard called the meeting to order. Due to no quorum, Leonard noted that the meeting would start with the Directors' Reports. Agenda modified to allow guest, Will Fleenor, to speak earlier in the meeting.

**2. Directors' Report**

**Planning and Outreach**

- A. **College Square Update** – SPLOST Project Manager, Diana Jackson, updated the board regarding the construction of College Square. The barricades have been installed, and all of the large trees have been removed. The next step will be utility and sewer line installation and relocating and replacing fire hydrants. Jackson also met with the ACCGov Police Department about a request to add six additional cameras, along with the needed electrical and fiber conduit. Any addition like this would come from the contingency fund that the Mayor and Commission allocated. David Lynn asked if anyone had heard any feedback from the merchants. Jackson said that Superintendent, Chris Malstaff, has made contact with merchants a couple of times a week to answer any questions that they might have along the way. Lastly, Sheridan Construction will provide a draw schedule, and the first payment will be due soon. Jeff Bishop thanked everyone for making the project happen quickly.

Attorney Greg Sowell noted for the record that Andrew Ratcliffe joined the meeting via Google Meets, and a quorum is present.

Jason Leonard asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 14, 2026, meeting. Drew Dekle motioned to approve, and Jeff Bishop seconded. Motion passed.

- B. **Solicitor General Will Fleenor** – David Lynn introduced Athens-Clarke County Solicitor General Will Fleenor to the board. Fleenor was asked to lead a discussion on the right of way ordinance and barring. Fleenor said barring individuals typically involves incidents of violence or property damage when they are identified as repeat offenders. The challenge with barring individuals is the enforcement. Currently barring is only enforceable if they are under a felony sentence. Misdemeanor

probations are overseen differently within each jurisdiction. Fleenor said that the judges have to be convinced with enough evidence that one could be barred from Downtown without being inadvertently arrested and not as a condition of a sentence. Violating a court order is not an arrestable offence. Fleenor stated that changing the process would give ACCPD the authority to make an arrest if someone is violating the conditions of their sentence. Currently this process is long and arduous. Fleenor concluded that it was good that our organization was present at the meeting to show the judges that this is important to our community.

David Lynn asked Fleenor to speak on the new right of way ordinance. Lynn had hoped that this new ordinance would address the storage of belongings in the public right-of-way, like at the entrance of the old Starbucks building or on picnic tables in College Square. Fleenor stated that if there are other tables available or space to walk around the person's belongings, then the right-of-way is not blocked. This new ordinance was trying to address part of the issue, but in the end, the ordinance isn't as robust as it needs to be to manage the problem.

Drew Dekle asked about ACCGov's local code 115 that states that law enforcement officers do not have the authority to arrest unless it is for disorderly conduct, public intoxication, or if they believe the person will not appear in court. Otherwise, the local ordinances are not arrestable, only citable.

Linda Ford stated that she and David Lynn had the opportunity to talk to the head of the Homeless Coalition in Savannah. In July, Savannah passed an urban camping ordinance, and it has not yet been challenged. They have only arrested about 15 people and those were for more severe issues. The key is that they have a path to housing for everyone.

Fleenor said the ordinance was written to address sidewalks that are completely obstructed and no one can pass. He gave the example of a Friday night at 2am, when there are people flooding the sidewalks. The police can use the ordinance as a tool to move people along. If an urban camping ordinance is what the organization wants to address, then the ordinance needs to be specific.

Commissioner Allison Wright said that if the legislative committee reconvened, the manager would like to use the boundaries of the business districts (like Downtown, Five Points, and Normaltown), to clearly define the districts that would need a right-of-way ordinance.

Attorney Greg Sowell said that it would be appropriate for the ADDA to recommend to the legislative committee of ideas to address behaviors outside of what is acceptable Downtown, due to the density and pedestrian heavy district.

- C. **Costa Park Update** – David Lynn was given an update from SPLOST that said that all the major work should be finished by the end of next

week. They asked to give the sod and other landscape some time to mature before the programming starts. Keyes Williamson and his firm, WLA, would like to volunteer to maintain the park as a community service project.

## **Business Services**

- D. **Real Time Crime Center Grant** – Linda Ford reported that Drew Dekle had asked that the ADDA offer a grant to help downtown businesses fund the Fusus Core unit that would connect cameras to ACCGov’s Real Time Crime Center. The grant would be a maximum of \$2500. Like the other grants, funding depends on ADDA budget. Drew Dekle motioned to approve the grant and Jeff Bishop seconded. Motion approved.
- E. **Location Analytics** – Placer.ai presented a demo to Linda Ford showing how location analytics and data could bring many benefits and added value to Downtown. Some of the data shared showed that downtown Athens had 1.3 million unique visitors in 2025 and could track those visitors by the day. The data is collected from cell phones and filtered through a third party to ensure privacy. Jason Leonard stated that this is exactly the kind of metric that potential businesses look for and a DDA should be able to provide this to potential businesses looking to be located Downtown. Ford said that this data can help show that downtown Athens should be a priority and that downtown is an economic driver for the whole community. The cost for access to the Placer.ai subscription is between \$12-\$15K annually.
- F. **Savannah Interagency Council on Homelessness** – Linda Ford continued with the discussion on Savannah. The directors spoke with Stephanie Kaple, Executive Director of Interagency Council on Homelessness in Savannah. She was very willing to share her experiences with the ADDA and ACCGov. In 2023 Savannah started a homeless court, which dismisses misdemeanors and minor felonies for participants who complete the program. They also built a Veterans Tiny House Village that consists of 46 tiny homes for veterans. Their Homeless Coalition created a dashboard where all organizations are using the same system. They also built another tiny home village for families. In May they adopted an encampment management policy and an urban camping ordinance. Kaple will be in Athens in March and would be happy to meet anyone who wants to come. Jason Leonard and Greg Sowell hope that the success that Savannah has had in Georgia will give Athens-Clarke County some encouragement in writing ordinances that can be enforced.

Andrew Ratcliffe said he can put the ADDA in contact with Jim Reese, who started the Atlanta Mission Homeless Coalition and has had a lot of success in the Greater Atlanta area.

- G. **Executive Session** - none

3. **Financial Report** – Linda Ford stated that parking revenue is still quite a bit ahead of last year, even with the severe weather in January keeping people away. The icy streets were too dangerous for our parking violation officers, so ticketing revenue was impacted. The county finally put salt out on the areas around the courthouse, but most of the south sides of Clayton and Washington Streets were not a priority.

Ford also updated the board that Rachel Swartz had spent a lot of time working on the parking app and trying to get updates that will make the app easier for users. Jeff Bishop asked why we decided to go with AMP. Swartz said that the parking office is already connected with Aims with all of the parking enforcement software and that Aims has a lower per transaction fee than other companies. Jeff Bishop pointed out that Downtown will have an extremely high proportion of new users all the time, so we need to find ways to get the communication out to everyone.

4. **Suggested future agenda topics and announcements** – Follow up with the right-of -committee, additional thoughts on how to promote the new parking system, noise ordinance, deferred maintenance on light poles.
5. **Adjourn** – Jeff Bishop motioned to adjourn the meeting and Drew Dekle seconded. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 4:23 pm.

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Jason Leonard, Board Chair

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Linda Ford, Director of Business Services

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David Lynn, Director of Planning and Outreach