



City of Kingston
30 West Main St., Kingston, GA 30145
MILLAGE RATE PUBLIC HEARING
CITY HALL

August 13, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.

Councilmembers in Attendance: Mayor Michael McFarland, Councilman Reggie Applin, Councilwoman Patresha Northgraves, Councilwoman Kate Posey, Mayor Pro Temp Payton Silvers (Absent)

Staff in Attendance: Chief TJ Sosebee, Kelly Ensley, City Clerk, and Grayson Brown, Treasurer

Attendees: Fifteen (15)

I. Call Public Hearing to Order

Mayor Michael McFarland called the meeting to order at 5:59 p.m.

II. City of Kingston Mayor and Council announce its intention to increase property taxes for 2026

Patresha Northgraves read the Millage rate increase information

III. Call speakers from sign in sheet

- Brent West of Cemetery Street spoke regarding the tax increase, here out of curiosity and why is this happening. Patresha Northgraves explained the city is in a deficit and the prior plan to deal with that situation was not handled by prior administration. City could lose the Charter. Keeping the Charter keeps the city in control of what comes to our city.
- Fiscal rationale: Council described past missing income and exhausted funding streams; raising millage presented as necessary to avoid losing municipal control/charter and to pay operating bills.
- Protections noted: state law caps/controls how home values increase; current plan applies a homestead/home-built exemption automatically for residents in town for 2026.
- City will automatically apply the homestead (home-built) exemption for 2026 (residents must reapply in 2027); county/state controls limit property value increases.
- Miranda Waits of Railroad Street asked when the sewer system was coming to Kingston.
- Sewer program status: county contract signed with contractor; \$2.5M required; construction timeline ~17 months once started but realistic city estimate 2–3 years overall to bring system online.
- Consequences of sewer rollout: many roads will be opened for utility work (patching/paving costs), septic-to-sewer transitions may include hookup fees and higher monthly bills; details under study.
- Stormwater & ditches: repeated flooding complaints (standing water, blocked ditches, washed-out drop-offs).

Assisted by Summary AI

Individuals with disabilities who require certain accommodations in order to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting, or who have questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting or facilities are required to contact the ADA Coordinator at 770-336-5905 promptly to allow the city to make reasonable accommodations for those persons.

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- Tina West of Cemetery Street asked who is going to be in charge of money mismanaging?
- Council acknowledged a multi-year shortfall and legacy financial issues; some past poor decisions contributed to the deficit.
- Controls in place: a finance committee, double-signature redundancies, and open records policy — residents can request financials.
- Council emphasized planning beyond yearly budgets: joint comprehensive planning with the county for 10 years (and visioning up to 50 years) to stabilize finances and infrastructure.
- Outlook: leadership commits to improving oversight and sharing more financial information as it becomes available.
- Resident concerns: abrupt shift from little/no city tax to 5.700 mills seen as heavy burden— especially for elderly and low-income households given rising costs (gas, groceries).
- School vs county taxes: county property/tax rates have generally fallen, but school taxes remain a major driver of total tax burden.
- Water/sewer billing risk: introduction of sewer may increase household bills (example given: water \$20 could become ~\$40 with sewer); hookup fees likely one-time charges.
- Mitigations: council and staff investigating grants and low-income assistance (including a specific sewage grant to pay for connections for qualifying low-income residents) and considering targeted relief for vulnerable populations.
- Forward view: council weighing tax level vs service needs and seeking grant/funding options to reduce resident impact where possible.

IV. Board Comments

- Council responses: acknowledged concerns, reiterated need for revenue, promised transparency, and committed to obtaining and sharing specific cost/implementation details (sewer hookup amounts, billing impacts).
- Operational follow-up: ongoing requests to county for ditch cleaning and stormwater assistance; council to share new data with the public as it becomes available.
- Outlook: council emphasized continued public engagement (meetings, speaking slots) and multi-year planning to stabilize services and finances.

V. Motion to Adjourn Public Hearing

- Patresha Northgraves made a motion to adjourn meeting at 6:44 pm. Motion was seconded by Kate Posey. Motion was carried unanimously.

Michael McFarland, Mayor

Kelly Ensley, City Clerk

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