CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES

Pelham City Hall
Council Conference Room
February 2, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.

Proper notice of the regularly scheduled work session of the Pelham City Council was given in advance of such public meeting and the notice remained posted throughout the scheduled meeting.

Members of the Pelham City Council met on Monday, February 2, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. The regular work session was held in the Council Conference Room at Pelham City Hall and was open to the public.

Call to Order

The work session was called to order by Council President Leverett at 5:30 p.m.

Record of Attendance

The following elected officials were present:

Council President Chad Leverett
Councilmember Michelle Power
Councilmember Christine Townes
Councilmember Markus Hal Snowden
Councilmember Michael Harris
Mayor Rick Wash

The City Clerk/Treasurer recorded the attendance of the elected officials and announced a quorum was present. City Manager Gretchen DiFante and City Attorney Josh Arnold were present.

Media Present: None

Others Present: City department heads, city employees, and members of the public

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Harris to approve the January 20, 2026 Regular Work Session Minutes.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Power. There being no further discussion, the President of the Council announced the motion passed by a unanimous voice vote of those members present.

Request to Address the City Council – None

Update from the City Manager

City Manager Gretchen DiFante stated for years, residents have shared concerns about traffic congestion and emergency response delays caused by blocked railroad crossings along County Road 52. She said the City is excited to share that federal funding for Pelham's Railroad Crossing Elimination Project has now been fully obligated, officially allowing this important project to move forward.

Pelham was awarded $41.7 million dollars through a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) crossing elimination grant. The project was delayed for over a year while the FRA ensured that all applications met the updated requirements of the new administration.

This project will eliminate two at-grade CSX railroad crossings and improve traffic flow while ensuring first responders have reliable access across the tracks when seconds matter most.

Over the next several years, the City will begin environmental assessments, engineering and design work, utility coordination, and right-of-way acquisition—all required steps for a project of this scale. Construction is expected to begin in 2029, with completion required by April 30, 2031.

This is a major milestone for Pelham and a big step toward safer roads, improved mobility, and a stronger transportation network for our community.

Old Business

1. Discussion – Pelham Board of Education Appointment Process

City Manager Gretchen DiFante stated at the direction of the city council, she researched how other cities appoint citizens to their respective school boards. She reported she met several weeks ago with Pelham City Schools Superintendent Dr. Keri Johnson, who expressed her willingness to assist the City Council in identifying best practices for the appointment process.

Mrs. DiFante noted Dr. Johnson did not receive as much information as anticipated but will continue to follow up with other boards and superintendents to gather additional insight.

Ms. DiFante further stated Dr. Johnson was unable to attend the work session tonight but has indicated her interest in ensuring the needs of the school district and recognized best practices are considered when appointing a board member. She noted frequent turnover on boards can make it difficult to maintain continuity and momentum, and the City Council does not always have insight into a candidate's prior interactions with the school system.

Councilmember Power emphasized the importance of reviewing the overall appointment process, noting that some processes are anonymous. Councilmember Townes stated consideration should be given to the needs of the school board, emphasizing that board members best understand what is needed and what is being lost when vacancies occur. Councilmember Snowden stressed the importance of listening to the school board and conducting honest and sincere evaluations, noting the human element of the process should be handled in a professional and consistent manner when evaluating candidates. Councilmember Harris suggested involving Tracy Hill, Director of Human Resources, to apply the City's standard of hiring best practices to the appointment process. Council President Leverett discussed the value of establishing

set interview questions while also allowing opportunities to ask questions based on the interview. He further suggested that interviews could potentially be conducted in the Council Conference Room to create a less intimidating environment than when held in the Council Chambers.

New Business

1. Discussion – Accepting grant funds from the United States Tennis Association (USTA)

Pelham Racquet Club Director Chaney Mills noted applying for a grant through USTA at the national level for new fencing at the Pelham Tennis Center. She said the work has been completed and the funds have been distributed in the amount of $45,000.00, $15,000.00 over the original grant award amount. She noted the additional funds would be applied to supplement the overall project cost.

2. Discussion – Pelham Library Board Appointment Recommendations

City Manager Gretchen DiFante reminded the city council the process to appointment citizens to the Pelham Library Board was amended in November after the new city council took office. She said a Resolution was adopted which removed the Library Director from the interview process as it was determined to be a conflict of interest. Director of Human Resources Tracy Hill stated she stepped in since the department head was no longer involved in the process. Mrs. Hill reviewed the application and interview process. She said since there are two vacancies, the two highest scoring applicants would be recommended to move forward in the process.

There were no additional comments or questions from any members of the city council. It was the consensus of those members of the city council present to move forward with consideration of the Pelham Library Board appointments.

3. Review and Discussion – City Manager's Contract

Councilmember Power and Councilmember Harris were appointed at a prior work session to serve as the two city council representatives to work alongside Director of Human Resources Tracy Hill on the City Manager's contract. They led the conversation with the other city council members and reviewed the compiled data which reflected a marked study of similarly situated cities to Pelham and the compensation of those city manager and administrators. Further discussion followed.

It was the consensus of those members of the city council present to move forward with consideration of the City Manager's contract at the February 16, 2026 city council meeting.

Review of February 2, 2026 City Council Agenda

Council President Leverett and City Manager Gretchen DiFante reviewed the February 2, 2026 city council agenda.

E. Consent Agenda

A consent agenda is presented by the presiding officer at the beginning of a council meeting. Items presented on the consent agenda are considered routine and/or non-controversial and are organized apart from the rest of the agenda and are adopted by general consent and vote by the City Council without debate. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of

any one member. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda is approved or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the presiding officer and City Council.

1. Approval of the February 2, 2026 City Council Agenda

2. Approval of the January 20, 2026 Regular Council Meeting Minutes

3. **Resolution 2026-02-02-01** for consideration to approve a final summary change order for the Business Center Sewer Lift Station Improvements Project. This project has been completed under budget.

There were no comments or questions from any member of the city council.

4. **Resolution 2026-02-02-02** for consideration to accept a proposal from Enviro Management Corp. to provide sampling and testing services required by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management for the City of Pelham's MS4 Stormwater Program. This project was budgeted for FY2026.

There were no comments or questions from any member of the city council.

5. **Resolution 2026-02-02-03** for consideration to accept a proposal from and enter into an agreement with Goodwyn Mills Cawood (GMC) for landscape, signage, and survey services at the Interstate 65 / Highway 119 and Interstate 65 / County Road 52 interchanges. This project was budgeted for FY2026.

There were no comments or questions from any member of the city council.

F. Public Hearing(s) – None

G. Mayor's Report/Comments

H. Proclamation(s) and Resolution(s) by the Mayor and Others – None

I. Report by the City Manager

J. Report by the City Attorney

K. Request(s) to Address the Council – None

L. Old Business / Resolutions / Ordinances / Orders and Other Business – None

M. New Business / Resolutions / Ordinances / Orders and Other Business

1. **Resolution 2026-02-02-04** for consideration to accept the grant funds from the United States Tennis Association (USTA) and to allocate the use of said funds for improvements at the Pelham Tennis Center

There were no comments or questions from any member of the city council.

2. **Ordinance No. 526-01** amending the City of Pelham Business License Code of Ordinances to add language for consumable hemp and vape products, consistent with recently enacted legislation by the State of Alabama (**First Reading**)

There were no comments or questions from any member of the city council.

3. **Ordinance No. 399-07** amending the City of Pelham Code of Ordinances regarding the meeting schedule of the Pelham City Council (**First Reading**)

There were no comments or questions from any member of the city council.

(End of the February 2, 2026 Agenda Review)

Executive Session

Council President Leverett stated for the record the purpose of the Executive Session is to discuss the legal ramifications of and legal options for pending litigation, controversies not yet being litigated, but imminently likely to be litigated if the governmental body pursues a proposed course of action and to discuss the consideration the governmental body is willing to offer or accept when considering the purchase, sale, exchange, lease, or market value of real property under Sections 36-25A-7(a)(3)(6), Code of Alabama (1975), as amended.

City Attorney Josh Arnold stated the purpose of tonight's Executive Session is appropriate under Sections 36-25A-7(a)(3)(6), Code of Alabama (1975), as amended.

A motion was made by Councilmember Harris to enter into an Executive Session of the city council for the stated purpose. Said motion was seconded by Councilmember Power.

Council President Leverett asked the City Clerk/Treasurer for a roll call vote. The vote to adopt said motion was recorded as follows:

Chad Leverett, Council President	Yes
Michelle Power, Councilmember	Yes
Christine Townes, Council Member	Yes
Markus Hal Snowden, Council Member	Yes
Michael Harris, Council Member	Yes

Council President Leverett noted the Executive Session would take place in the Council Conference Room and asked the members of the City Council, Mayor Wash, City Manager Gretchen DiFante, Director of Development Services & Public Works Andrè Bittas, Chief of Police Ed Delmore, City Clerk/Treasurer Jonathan Seale, City Attorney Josh Arnold to attend the Executive Session. Council President Leverett stated, per City Manager Gretchen DiFante, he expected the city council to return from the Executive Session in approximately 10 minutes. The city council went into an Executive Session at 7:00 p.m.

Councilmember Townes moved to adjourn the Executive Session. Said motion was seconded by Councilmember Harris. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote of those members present, and the Executive Session was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Council President Leverett called the February 2, 2026 city council work session back to order at 7:07 p.m.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the work session was made by Councilmember Harris and seconded by Councilmember Snowden. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote of those members present, and the work session was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted this 2nd day of February 2026.

Jonathan Seale, CMC, City Clerk/Treasurer

Chad Leverett, President of the Council

[SEAL]