



CITY OF BROOKLET
104 CHURCH ST. BROOKLET, GA 30415 PHONE (912) 842-2137 FAX (912)842-5877

L.W. (Nicky) Gwinnett, Jr., Mayor
Sheila Wentz, Mayor Pro-Tem
Bradley Anderson, Councilman
Rebecca Kelly, Councilwoman
Hubert K. Roughton, Councilman
Phillip Oliver, Councilman

Lori Phillips, Int. City Manager
& City Clerk
Melissa Pevey, Assistant Clerk
Ben Perkins, City Attorney

**Brooklet's 2nd
Annual Hot Dog Social
&
Town Hall Meeting
March 12, 2026
6:00 PM**

Minutes

The City of Brooklet hosts its second annual Town Hall meeting, reflecting on the past and looking toward the future

The aroma of hot dogs and the buzz of neighborly conversation filled the air at the second annual Brooklet Town Hall meeting, but the evening was about more than just a shared meal. There was also discussion about Brooklet's future.

The second annual Brooklet Town Hall meeting was more than just a shared meal. Beneath the town's nostalgic, small-town charm, the pressures of modern growth are mounting, forcing a reckoning between cherished memories and multi-million-dollar realities.

An invocation prayer by long-time resident Gilbert Howard, with members of the local Blue Knights International Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club, posted the colors and led attendees in the pledge to the flag of the United States. This was then followed by Jazmine Wilson singing the National Anthem.

Mayor Nicky Gwinnett opened the night to a filled room at the Newman Center with a poignant reminder: "You can't make a good decision for the future if you don't have good information about the past. This philosophy is born from a life spent in Brooklet's streets,

back when the old barber, Richard Williams, would whip a straight razor across a leather strap at the corner barber shop."

The mayor shared memories of being six years old, terrified of the razor but transfixed by the world of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, where Marshall Robertson sat behind a cage window in a little green visor. These sensory fragments of the past, three school outfits a year and 15-cent bags of candy, provided the backdrop for a serious discussion on the town's looming evolution.

The \$5 Million Lesson: The High Price of Hesitation

One of the most sobering moments of the evening was a comparison of how the cost of infrastructure has evolved from a manageable investment into a staggering burden. Town records from the 1950s reveal that Brooklet once had the opportunity to install a town-wide sewer system for a mere \$38,000 to \$50,000.

Because that opportunity was missed, the town recently spent \$5 million just to run a single sewer line from Brooklet to Statesboro.

This massive price jump serves as a cautionary tale for any growing community about the economic impact of delayed action. Reflecting on the 25-year-plus process to finally bring sewer service to the area, the mayor noted that the cost comparison is simply "crazy." It highlights why the current administration is aggressively pursuing proactive planning to avoid similar financial pitfalls as the town expands toward the Highway 80 corridor.

History Hiding in Plain Sight: The Cemetery's Secret

As Brooklet updates its zoning and land-use plans, local leaders are discovering that the town's identity is anchored in the very ground beneath them. A recent presentation by Anne Cromley regarding the Brooklet Cemetery revealed that it might be the oldest landmark in town, dating back to the town's founding families.

Among the most stirring revelations was the discovery of a Spanish-American War veteran's grave. Long-time Brooklet resident Gilbert Howard mentioned it took volunteers nearly 45 minutes to locate it among the old markers.

Preserving these "old legends," along with historic court records and trials, is essential to Brooklet's soul as it modernizes. Community members expressed deep pride in this heritage, with one resident noting the surprise of discovering a connection to the Spanish-American War in their own backyard.

Beyond the cemetery, there is a growing push to officially designate historic areas, protecting the homes of long-time residents like Gilbert Howard and Bill Oliver.

Growth's Invisible Barriers

Managing the increasing traffic on Highway 80 has become a complex "financial catch-22" for the town. Engineering estimates for installing traffic lights at critical intersections—Parker Avenue and Cromley Road—now sit at approximately \$1.7 million per intersection.

While new residential subdivisions like the Focus subdivision will add to the congestion, they are not the primary cause of the current failure.

The town finds itself in a difficult position where the infrastructure is already struggling, yet the necessary improvements require a level of funding the city cannot provide without significant state or federal grant assistance. The current status of these intersections, as confirmed by traffic studies, reveals the urgency of the situation:

- Highway 80 and Cromley Road: Currently rated as failing.
- Highway 80 and Parker Avenue (near Ken's IGA): Currently rated as almost a fail.

Adaptive Reuse: Giving the Old School a New Life

The Mayor's most passionate "pet project" involves the old elementary school on Lee Street, a building where he once attended the first grade. Rather than letting this piece of local history fade, there is a vision to transform the historic structure into a multi-use facility.

The plan would see the building house a new City Hall, a public library, a dedicated voting precinct, and a training center for municipal groups. This move is as much about honoring the past as it is about practical governance.

The Mayor recalled how the current council chamber was once the school lunchroom, and the police department now occupies the former kitchen where the town's first band program began. By reclaiming the school, the town aims to "preserve one of the last historic things in this town," particularly after the painful loss of the old gym, which was torn down years ago.

The "Old Tin Man" and the Power of Community Branding

The removal of the "Old Tin Man," the historic water tank that once towered over downtown, remains a point of communal grief for those who saw it as a local monument. To fill this void, the town is looking toward community branding to ensure Brooklet remains a destination rather than just a pass-through on the highway.

Drawing inspiration from Rutherford, North Carolina, the Mayor proposed implementing standardized signage with a consistent aesthetic to draw travelers toward downtown businesses.

Volunteers like Michelle Wilson and the Brooklet Community Development Association (BCDA) already work tirelessly to maintain the town’s spirit through the Peanut Festival. However, creating a visible, revitalized corridor from Highway 80 down Parker Avenue is seen as the next step in economic survival. Better landscaping and matching signs would signal to strangers that there is a vibrant "human heart" beating just a few blocks off the main road.

A Vision for the Next 20 Years

The assistant executive director of the Coastal Regional Commission, Aaron Carpenter, was on hand to give updates on Brooklet’s first Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which is a 20-year roadmap for the future. This plan is not meant to turn Brooklet into a sprawling metropolis, but rather to provide the zoning tools necessary to handle development "in a good way before we’re overwhelmed by it."

To support this, the city has already secured \$5.7 million in grants for road paving, new wells, and a 12-inch water line running from Joiner to Cromley Road. As Brooklet navigates this era of multi-million-dollar sewer lines and advanced infrastructure, the challenge remains one of balance. The goal of the Land Use Plan is to ensure the town can modernize its fire protection and water pressure without erasing its heritage.

The question for the next generation is how to embrace these high-tech tools of governance while keeping the 15-cent candy bag spirit alive in the heart of the community.

Approved this _____ day of _____, _____.

L.W. (Nicky) Gwinnett, Jr., Mayor

Lori Phillips, Int. City Manager/City Clerk