

**ARENA DISTRICT STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Committee Members Present:

Mayor Kelly Girtz, Committee Chair
Commissioner Allison Wright
Commissioner John Culpepper
David Bradley, Athens Chamber of Commerce
Jason Leonard, Downtown Development Authority
Jennifer Zwirn, Classic Center Authority
Tres Small, Classic Center Authority

Committee Members Absent:

Staff:

Interim Assistant Manager Ilka McConnell
Chinesia Thompson, Recorder

Commissioner Tiffany Taylor

Visitors:

Paul Cramer, Classic Center

Committee Chair Mayor Kelly Girtz called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

A. Approval of Meeting Agenda

Mayor Kelly Girtz motioned to approve the agenda, David Bradley seconded the motion. With no discussion, the agenda was unanimously approved by the committee.

B. Approval of Minutes:

The draft minutes from November 19, 2025, were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Allison Wright and seconded by David Bradley. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Review & Vote Upon Updated Scope of Work for Arena Development Facilitator

The mayor opened the discussion by reflecting on the extensive process that led to the selection of Accenture, noting that the committee must now turn its attention to determining the appropriate funding level for the project. He emphasized that the current effort represents only the study and analysis phase, with additional phases to follow as the project moves closer to actual development. A document was presented outlining the project's components over a four-year period, broken down into Phase 1 and Phase 2. Ilka reviewed the document, explaining that once the contract is executed, coordination with Accenture will begin. Judd is currently working on the contract. This initial phase will include developing briefings and a timeline, building on substantial groundwork already completed, such as collecting information from the Classic Center and reviewing ACC government documents, including environmental reports and market studies. Additional materials, such as utility maps, zoning information, and parcel ownership details, were provided by the Classic Center's attorney, though some studies may need updating depending on their age.

Ilka then outlined the stakeholder engagement component, which will involve working closely with stakeholders, hosting public open houses, and gathering community feedback. These efforts will inform the development framework for the district and guide strategies for individual

parcels. A key priority, as emphasized in discussions between the mayor and consultants, is ensuring that the project generates sufficient revenue to cover bond obligations. Phase 2 will expand into further market analysis, infrastructure coordination, and financial modeling for various parcels, while Phase 3 will focus on developer solicitation and geostructuring. The mayor noted that the estimated cost for Phases 1 and 2 will not exceed \$600,000, inclusive of outside consulting, while costs for later phases will be determined as the project progresses. During the discussion, David Bradley asked whether the committee would also oversee Phases 3 and 4; the mayor confirmed that the group would be responsible for identifying the optimal developer or developers. Ilka added that procurement could be handled with support from the attorney's office and third-party counsel, which the mayor affirmed. The discussion concluded with Commissioner Wright motioning to approve the scope of work, seconded by Commissioner Culpepper, and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Chair's Contract Funding Recommendation to the Commission

Mayor Kelly Girtz updated the committee on the funding strategy he plans to present to Mayor and Commission, as well as to the Classic Center Authority through an intergovernmental agreement. The proposal outlines a three-way funding split to cover the approximately \$600,000 cost, ultimately prorated to about \$562,000 in billable expenses. Under this approach, one-third of the funding would come from existing SPLOST revenue, another third from accumulated TAD revenue designated for use west of the river, and the final third from the Authority. During the discussion, David Bradley asked whether there were projections for the costs of later phases of the project. Ilka explained that while the steps for future phases have been identified, specific cost estimates will not be known until the project progresses further.

Looking ahead, Judd is continuing to finalize the contract, with the goal of placing it on the agenda in March and bringing it forward for a vote in April, meaning the contractor will need to be under contract by that time. The committee also discussed its next meeting, which Ilka described as the kickoff for Phase 1. This meeting will focus on establishing governance protocols, including how decisions will be made and how the process will move forward. As the project advances, the committee will primarily serve as a stakeholder group, providing input on community considerations and the success of the Classic Center while receiving regular updates. Their next major decision point is expected to come during Phase 3, when developer selection becomes a central focus.

E. Identify Next Meeting Date

The next committee meeting will be held on April 17, 2026, at 8:30 am.

F. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:20 pm following a motion by David Bradley and a second by Jennifer Zwirm.