

JOHNSTOWN CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, January 15, 2026

The Greater Johnstown City Council met in a stated session for special business.  
Mayor Sylvia King called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Mayor King offered the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The following members of Council were present for roll call:

Mayor Sylvia King, Charles Arnone, Samuel Barber, Lorraine Brandon-Taylor,  
Taylor Clark, Nicolas Spinelli

Mike Capriotti, Assistant City Manager; Aimee Willett, Solicitor; and Jennifer  
Burkhart, Executive Secretary; were also present

PUBLIC COMMENT-AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mike Capriotti, Assistant City Manager, explained each candidate would be asked five questions. They would be given three minutes per question to answer for a total of 15 minutes per candidate. Candidates would be kept seated in the hallway outside of Council chambers as they wait. He noted the position would need filled by the February 2026 meeting, so Council would meet to decide before then.

The five questions asked were as follows:

1. Why are you seeking this vacancy on City Council?
2. What skills and experience do you have that you believe would be beneficial to you as a Councilman?
3. How do you plan to engage with the residents and business within the City?
4. What are the top three issues facing the City in your opinion?
5. If you received a one million dollar grant to you for the City in any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

Nicholas Graham, the first candidate, stated he would like to be a part of local government, working with the Council and City Manager's office to help better develop the City, its citizens, and its communities. He wanted to be a part of a positive impact on the residents and communities.

Mr. Graham said his beneficial skills and experience would include collaboration and communication. He noted he enjoys collaborating with others, problem solving, and working through differences. He also enjoys talking through problems, issues and concerns, and listening with empathy. He likes being part of a team and strives towards a positive goal.

Mr. Graham planned to engage residents and businesses by listening to cares, concerns, problems, and issues; always being available to the citizens and communities; and work with other City Council Members to bring citizen concerns to meetings.

Mr. Graham shared his top three issues facing the City. He stated the City does not have a great image at the moment and needs to bring to light all of the good things City Council and local government is looking to do for the City. His second area of concern is the locations of public bus stops, particularly on busy streets where the bus stop is in the lane of traffic. He noted that other cities have a designated bus lane where the bus pulls over to load and unload passengers. His third issue is trash collection services. He stated the City has a contract with one company and residents must use that company. He noted residents are not allowed to shop around for a cheaper or better rate.

If he received a one-million-dollar grant, Mr. Graham shared he would listen to the people of the City and determine a popular opinion. He noted his personal plan would be bus stops. He added he would look into community development like a recreational area or dance club for teenagers and young adults.

The second candidate was Michael Hamacek. He stated he was seeking to fill the vacancy because he is from Johnstown, loves the City, and would like to be a big part in making changes in the City. He has been around City Hall for 35 years doing residential work. After watching for years, he stated he would like to be a part of bringing the City back. He would like to bring more businesses back into Johnstown and make it a better place for people to live with better neighborhoods and less blight. He also added he thought he could make a positive change in the City.

For his skills and experience, Mr. Hamacek shared his contracting experience, which includes building knowledge, remodeling, equipment, demolition, plumbing and electrical. He has run his own business for 36 years and knows how to make good choices to get the best bang for the buck. He noted, with the upcoming projects like Main Street, he knows how things operate and is good at facilitation.

Mr. Hamacek stated he had good conversations with people while he was campaigning. He also planned to engage with residents through volunteer work, noting he volunteers at the soup kitchen. He added, when he goes out to eat, he tries to frequent Johnstown businesses particularly in downtown.

Mr. Hamacek stated his first issue facing the City is blight. His second issue is the lack of upscale housing within downtown. He added the downtown area is the nucleus of the City. He noted many people work from home, and they could move to Johnstown for a fraction of what they pay in a large city like New York but they would still like a city-type environment. His third issue is the way public housing is controlled. He stated there is an influx of people moving into the area, and he believed that is where a lot of crime is coming from. He would like to see what could be done about problems with housing.

Mr. Hamacek shared he would put a million dollar grant towards blight in Johnstown, which he sees as the biggest problem. He added that blight could have been fixed using money during Covid. He elaborated, if he had a large amount of money, he would try to hire people in the City to have an ongoing program.

Melissa Komar was the third candidate. She explained she was seeking to fill the vacant seat because she is passionate about the Johnstown community. She spent the past 23 years in government before shifting to the private sector where she works with municipalities throughout the state. She added it was exciting to see how a team of believers can work together to create a positive end result. Ms. Komar shared she would like to be a part of the team and noted many ways to utilize knowledge gained to present a positive message. She noted the need to continue growing opportunities for youth in the community. She added Council needs to focus on every age group and what opportunities there are for constituents and residents.

Ms. Komar shared her background to explain her skills and experience. She started with the City as the GIS planner before becoming the land management coordinator nine years later. She also worked as the assistant city manager, interim city manager, and executive director at JRA. She noted, through her career, she learned how to leverage grant dollars with general fund dollars. She added, as assistant city manager, she was able to show partnerships through the departments and how to create collaboration. Her time as interim city manager taught her how to accept scrutiny and how to have the knowledge to create balance and positivity. During her time at JRA, she found it exciting to meet with the leadership of the municipalities JRS treated wastewater for and to partner with the municipalities on projects.

Ms. Komar shared she engages with residents and businesses in the City every day. She noted not just the importance of how she engages but also how she responds and follows through with concerns. She stated communication is a key part of being a council member. She added she would not say she has all the answers but knows how to connect people to the person who does have the answers. She loves to attend community events and see the pride they bring to the City and the enthusiasm people have on good days. She added there can also be bad days where she can leverage relationships to assist people in solving their problems. She shared that people are sometimes unaware of the importance in attending public meetings and what can be accomplished by going to meetings.

Ms. Komar's first issue with the City is the need for infrastructure upgrades. She provided examples, such as nonworking lights at Point Park, and lifted sidewalks in walkable areas and streets which were paved after sewer projects but were then excavated for People's Gas to do work. Her second issue is dealing with blight elimination. She stated there is opportunity for rehabilitation and redevelopment, not just demolition. She added there are ways to restore history and build neighborhoods back up by leveraging dollars through state, federal and local groups. Her third issue would be public safety. She noted there are continued opportunities for police, fire and EMS to embrace the youth, build them up, and educate them while creating positivity in communities. She added that the cooperation of emergency services can help eliminate issues where kids have too much time.

Ms. Komar stated, if she had a million-dollar grant, her first step would be to use the money to leverage additional funds and turning the money into two or three million. She would schedule public meetings in communities to hear what citizens are looking for that has not already been accomplished through various funds the City has already received. She added, by working together with community and economic development, public works and public safety, a strategic plan could be developed to make a huge impact.

Jasmine LaRue, the fourth candidate, stated she was seeking the vacancy to finish what she already started. She added she had campaign to be an asset to the City and to help the community which she wanted to continue to do.

Ms. LaRue shared her skills and experience, including being a team player with community engagement experience. She volunteers at different church activities and coaches with youth. She noted her new position as a program coordinator at Bridges Cooperative Industries has opened her eyes even more as to why she wants to serve on the City Council.

Ms. LaRue would engage with residents and businesses by continuing to be involved with community meetings, attending business association meetings, advocating for new businesses, staying engaged, and being open to ideas and people who want to start businesses.

Ms. LaRue believed the top three issues facing the City are poverty, homelessness, and a lack of education on how to get resources.

If she received a million-dollar grant, Ms. LaRue would like a building downtown to help homeless people, especially in extreme temperatures. She added she would like a place where they could clean up, gain confidence to go to job interviews, and be presentable. She wanted a space that was judgement free and would allow them to become contributing members in the community.

#### OLD BUSINESS

None.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT: NON-AGENDA ITEM

None.

#### RECESS/ADJOURNMENT

The next scheduled special meeting is January 28, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., and the next regular scheduled meeting is February 11, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 5:40 p.m.