



CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

300 Martin Luther King Blvd.
February 24, 2026
TIME: 6:00 PM

1. A CALL TO ORDER

President Allen called the council meeting to order at 06:00 pm and asked Mr. Jones to call the roll.

2. ROLL CALL

All City Council members were present. Mayor Smith was absent.

1. George Allen, Janataka Hughley-Holmes, Leigh Whatley, Chuck Beams, Todd Rauch

3. INVOCATION

President Allen provided the invocation.

1. W. George Allen - President of the City Council.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Jones led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Russell A. Jones, MMC - City Clerk.

5. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. Motion to Adopt the CM Agenda for 02-24-26.

MOTION TO ADOPT THE AGENDA: UNANIMOUS

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Councilman Ward 5 Todd Rauch

SECONDER: Councilman Ward 4 - President Pro-Tem Chuck Beams

AYES: Councilman Ward 1 - President Allen, Councilwoman Ward 2 Hughley-Holmes, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Councilman Ward 4 - President Pro-Tem Beams, Councilman Ward 5 Rauch

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

6. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8. MAYOR COMMENTS AND RECOGNITIONS

9. PUBLIC HEARINGS (Limit comments to 3 minutes or less)

President Allen asked Mr. Jones to present the public hearing.

1. Public Hearing - Project Development Agreement with Faith Technologies, Inc.
Mr. Jones presented the public hearing. President Allen opened the public hearing and asked if anyone present would like to speak for or against said project development agreement.

Tom Nist of 305 N 4th Street, Opelika, spoke against the project development agreement, citing concerns about not knowing what the meeting or agreement was for exactly.

Jason Lanz of 410 N 9th Street spoke against the project development agreement, citing concerns about not knowing what the agreement was for based on the documents provided online.

Morgan Carpenter of 2100 Sanders Creek Drive, Opelika, spoke against the project development agreement, citing concerns about it being for a "data center".

Sue Ellen Tallakson of 910 David Street, Opelika, spoke against the project development agreement, citing concerns about possible non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) being signed by elected officials.

Greg Hill of 3021 Anderson Road, Opelika, spoke neither for nor against the project development agreement, but did state he owns the adjoining property and would like to speak with someone from the company.

Mike Bass of 805 Forestdale Court, Opelika, spoke against the project development agreement, citing concerns about not knowing what this was for exactly and asked the council to consider tabling it.

Judy Blackmon of 401 Hillflo Avenue, Opelika, spoke against the project development agreement, citing concerns about it being for a "data center".

President Allen closed the public hearing.

10. AGENDA-RELATED PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limit comments to 3 minutes or less)

Jason Lanz of 410 N 9th Street, Opelika, spoke first. Mr. Lanz stated his concerns about citizens not being provided useful information about these types of agreements before it comes to council for approval.

Tom Nist of 315 N 4th Street, Opelika, spoke next. Mr. Nist stated his concerns about the city council trying to approve this without letting its citizens know what it actually is.

Tessa Tallakson of 1022 Renfro Avenue, Opelika, spoke next. Ms. Tallakson stated concerns that even if this company wasn't an actual "data center", they are a manufacturer of supplies for data centers, and could possibly open the door for that industry to then come to Opelika.

Dustin Howard of 1022 Renfro Avenue, Opelika, spoke next. Mr. Howard stated his concerns about "data centers", and went through a list of the negative health impacts one would potentially have if it were to be located in Opelika.

11. CONSENT AGENDA

12. GENERAL BUSINESS

13. AWARDING OF BIDS

14. RESOLUTIONS

President Allen asked Mr. Treese to present the resolutions.

1. Approve Project Development Agreement with Faith Technologies, Inc. - ED.

President Allen asked if there was a motion to approve the project development agreement resolution. Ms. Holmes made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Beams seconded the motion.

During discussion, Ms. Holmes asked President Allen if the Director of Economic Development, John Sweatman, could explain to the citizens what Faith Technologies Inc. (FTI) would be doing, per the agreement, in greater detail. President Allen agreed and asked Mr. Sweatman to speak.

Mr. Sweatman explained that the FTI project was not a "data center", they would be a manufacturing operation for the electronics industry, they would be located in the old JoAnn Distribution Center building, and they would provide up to 200 high wage jobs for the community. Ms. Whatley again asked for clarification that this was not going to be a "data center" or even a "stepping stone" for a data center. Mr. Sweatman again stated that this was not for a "data center" and the location wouldn't ever have the capacity to house one. Mr. Rauch asked for an explanation on why they needed a special meeting for this. Mr. Sweatman explained that it was due to public notice requirements and the company's timeline. Mr. Rauch then asked Mr. Sweatman to explain the process they use, and why the Economic Development department presents projects, like this one, to only the city council members ahead of the public meetings. Mr. Sweatman answered that, in the economic development profession, they respect the privacy and confidentiality of the companies/projects they work on, they often work on projects under code names for years (where he doesn't even know the name of the company), he will sometimes have to operate under a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), they retain the right to say "no", and they do say "no" quite often to

potential projects that aren't a fit for Opelika. Mr. Rauch asked if Mr. Sweatman could operate under a NDA, and if the city council would be allowed to operate under one as well. Mr. Sweatman deferred to the city attorney. Mr. Treese answered that some city employees, like Economic Development employees, are asked to, and allowed to, operate under NDA's due to competitive advantages, trade secrets, etc. of a company that are possibly shared at on-site visits for potential projects, and those are not usually shared with the public unless ordered by a judge or required by public policy. Mr. Rauch asked about the council ever signing NDAs. Mr. Treese answered that he wasn't aware of the city council ever signing any NDAs, and would never instruct them to sign one without his review first.

Mr. Rauch then asked if the council could hear from a representative from FTI. President Allen agreed. Matt Rabine, Real-Estate Development Manager for FTI, explained that FTI as a whole provides solutions for power management, and FTI specifically at this facility would be manufacturing electrical assemblies and modular electrical systems for their clients. Mr. Beams asked if this was related in any way to the country bringing back manufacturing that had previously gone overseas. Mr. Rabine answered no, this would primarily be a facility for assembly. Mr. Rauch asked about the potential for large truck traffic. Mr. Rabine answered no, they would not have a tremendous amount of truck traffic. Mr. Rauch then asked if they would need increased capacity for utilities. Mr. Rabine answered no, their requirements for utilities are currently available on-site. Mr. Rauch asked again, and stated, that this facility would not ever host a third party "data center" now or in the future. Mr. Rabine answered that was correct, and then added that their operation was not overly loud, vibration creating, or dust creating beyond regular industry standards.

President Allen then opened the discussion up for questions about the potential approval of the tax abatements that would be in consideration with the project development agreement. Mr. Beams first asked Mr. Sweatman to explain the tax abatement process to everyone. Mr. Sweatman explained the entire process in detail, including approval from the State of Alabama Department of Commerce, as well as the City Council being the overall granting authority of any state, county, and local sales tax and/or property tax abatements. Mr. Rauch asked if this was typically how projects happen, since FTI had already purchased the facility before these agreements had been approved. Mr. Sweatman answered that projects happen in all sorts of different ways, and noted that tax abatements are the best tool for Opelika to be competitive against much bigger cities and attract businesses to come here. Mr. Rauch asked if they just assume the city council will approve these before being presented to them. Mr. Sweatman answered that he would not ever assume anything, and noted that Mr. Rauch, in his time on the council, had approved over 50 statutory tax abatements. Mr. Sweatman also noted that over the past 20 plus years, the city has used these tax abatements to add over 6,000 jobs and over 2.6 Billion dollars in investment in Opelika. Mr. Rauch also asked about the incentives of this project. Mr. Sweatman listed the incentives included in the project agreement. Ms. Holmes then stated that the amount of jobs being added, at their pay rate and including local occupational taxes over the length of the project, should offset the overall amount of tax abatements and then continue thereafter. Mr. Sweatman agreed and noted that over the last few years the city has lost close to 1,500 jobs with the closing of 3 different companies, and they are working hard to replace those jobs. Mr. Beams

noted that the job incentives are tiered and not received by the company until they provide the amount of jobs at each tier. Mr. Sweatman agreed and noted that all of these incentives are also budgeted ahead of time.

President Allen then asked Mr. Jones to call the roll and the following vote was recorded:

RESOLUTION NO. 050-26

MOTION TO APPROVE: UNANIMOUS

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Councilwoman Ward 2 Janataka Hughley-Holmes

SECONDER: Councilman Ward 4 - President Pro-Tem Chuck Beams

AYES: Councilman Ward 1 - President Allen, Councilwoman Ward 2 Hughley-Holmes, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Councilman Ward 4 - President Pro-Tem Beams, Councilman Ward 5 Rauch

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

2. Approve Certain Tax Abatements and Exemptions for Faith Technologies, Inc. - ED.

RESOLUTION NO. 051-26

MOTION TO APPROVE: UNANIMOUS

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Councilman Ward 4 - President Pro-Tem Chuck Beams

SECONDER: Councilwoman Ward 2 Janataka Hughley-Holmes

AYES: Councilman Ward 1 - President Allen, Councilwoman Ward 2 Hughley-Holmes, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Councilman Ward 4 - President Pro-Tem Beams, Councilman Ward 5 Rauch

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

15. ORDINANCES

16. APPOINTMENTS

17. SECOND ROSTER OF PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limit comments to 3 minutes or less)

Morgan Carpenter of 2100 Sanders Creek Drive spoke first. Mr. Carpenter stated that all the confusion and concerns about this could have been avoided if the city had more transparency about what this actually was before the meeting.

Tom Nist of 315 N 4th Street spoke next. Mr. Nist also stated that all the concerns about a "data center" coming could have been avoided if the city had not tried to hide what this was going to be, and he now believed this would be a great thing for the city.

18. ADJOURN

The City Council meeting minutes of February 24, 2026, are hereby adopted and approved this the 3rd day of March, 2026.

/s/ W. George Allen

President of City Council
City of Opelika, Alabama

ATTEST:

/s/ Russell A. Jones, MMC

City Clerk

1. Motion to Adjourn.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: UNANIMOUS

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Councilman Ward 5 Todd Rauch

SECONDER: Councilwoman Ward 3 Leigh Whatley

AYES: Councilman Ward 1 - President Allen, Councilwoman Ward 2
Hughley-Holmes, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Councilman
Ward 4 - President Pro-Tem Beams, Councilman Ward 5 Rauch

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

The council meeting ended at 06:54 pm.

**CALL OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF OPELIKA, ALABAMA**

To: Russell Jones, City Clerk:

In accordance with §11-43-50, *Code of Alabama*, 1975, the undersigned as President of the City Council of the City of Opelika, Alabama, hereby calls a special meeting of the City Council of the City of Opelika, to be held Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 6:00 pm in the Courtroom of the Opelika Municipal Court Building, 300 Martin Luther King Boulevard, in the City of Opelika, for the purpose of holding a public hearing and of considering and acting on the following resolution:

(1) Resolution Approving a Project Development Agreement with Faith Technologies.

You are directed to give notice to all Council members in the manner prescribed by law.

DATED this the 10th day of February, 2026.



W. GEORGE ALLEN
PRESIDENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF OPELIKA, ALABAMA