City Council of Peachtree City
Retreat Workshop Minutes
May 2, 2017

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met in Retreat workshop session on Tuesday, May 2, 2017. Mayor Vanessa Fleisch opened the workshop at 6:30 p.m. Council Members attending: Terry Ernst, Mike King, Kim Learnard, and Phil Prebor.

The topics for the workshop were the Comprehensive Plan and Annexation.

City Manager Jon Rorie noted this was the first of two Retreat workshops leading up to the budget workshops that would begin in June. The Retreat workshop on June 6 would focus on PTC Economics, and the first budget workshop was scheduled on June 26.

Planning & Development Director Mike Warrix said the initial public hearing that began the Comprehensive Plan process was held in August 2016, and they would present the draft plan at this meeting. The Steering Committee members had worked diligently on the plan for the last six months.

Senior Planner Robin Cailloux addressed the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, noting the state mandated the plan be updated every five years. It helped the City keep its Qualifying Local Government status (QLG) with the state, which allowed the City to procure grants and participate in some programs. Planning was also part of the City's genetics, and current residents were reaping the rewards of those planning efforts. The Comprehensive Plan allowed the City to confirm and establish its goals, as well as allowing the City to pay that forward by ensuring a high quality of life for future generations. The Plan also offered a framework on how to implement or achieve the goals.

The timeline for the update began with the public hearing on August 4, 2016. The Steering Committee kickoff meeting was held October 4, 2016, and the first public open house was held on December 8, 2016. The Steering Committee was comprised of a cross-section of citizens and included Scott Bradshaw, Nate Walker, Sean McMillan, Tonya Curry, and Kim Westwood. The committee first met on January 10, 2017. Open houses were held in December and February. The Steering Committee held a joint meeting with the Planning Commission, other City boards, and the Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA) on February 27. The committee met again on April 13 and will also present the draft at the May 8 Planning Commission meeting. The final draft would be on the May 18 City Council agenda, with the Department of Community Affairs review to follow (May – July). The target adoption date by City Council was in late July or early August. Once adopted, the City would retain its QLG status.

The Comprehensive Plan update had been a listening exercise, Cailloux said. It provided an opportunity to listen to the public and Steering Committee. She continued that three major topics had come up – economic development, transportation, and the village concept (land use) and how it could be practically implemented in today's environment. The three areas had intertwined impacts, and the joint meeting was held to talk about those impacts. The goal was to start "breaking down the silos" and understand the interrelated consequences of decisions that were made.

The community had confirmed goals that included protecting the environment and greenbelts, using the village concept for annexations and redevelopments, encouraging quality job growth, providing safe and convenient travel through and within the City, and balancing the levels of service with the City's long-term financial liability. This confirmed established goals that would keep the City heading in the same direction. The committee also identified some policies and practices that could be measured in achieving those goals, and they helped create the Community Work Program (CWP) in the Comprehensive Plan, which outlined the action items to achieve the goals. The CWP table included the goal, the actions needed to achieve the goal, the responsible department/commission/organization, funding and source, and which year the actions/goals should be accomplished (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022).

The economic development action items included shifting the tax burden away from residents (increasing commercial and industrial share of tax base). In Peachtree City, the residential tax base was approximately 66% compared to just under 33% commercial/industrial use. Fayette County's tax base was approximately the same as the City's. Coweta County residential property owners made up approximately 57% of the tax base, while commercial/industrial uses were approximately 43% of the tax base. The state tax base average was approximately 51% residential and 49% commercial/industrial.

Cailloux said the City had partnered with the Fayette County Development Authority to attract new development and to keep businesses and jobs that were already here. Many existing companies in the County were doing significant expansions on-site. Rorie added that the Planning Commission, Fayette County Development Authority, and Peachtree City Water & Sewerage Authority were in attendance at this meeting, and the idea was to have this conversation. At the April 20 City Council meeting, an impact fee waiver and a jobs grant were approved for an expansion at Rinnai, and those incentives were driven by ordinances and Council policy. The idea behind them was to encourage expansion and infill in the industrial park.

Transportation action items included encouraging alternative modes, and SPLOST projects would expand the multi-use path system, Cailloux said. She noted that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) looked at the City as a beacon of a multi-use path community, not only because the City had such an extensive program, but because it had been here for so long. The state was looking to the City to provide guidelines for other communities.

Managing congestion was another item, and there were SPLOST projects on SR 54 that should help. The City was also participating in multi-jurisdictional planning efforts to work with GDOT, such as Fayette County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the Gateway Coalition on SR 74 corridor plans.

Rorie noted that transportation was a regional issue that extended throughout South Atlanta. Staff had reached out to surrounding communities and had met with Coweta County recently to look at their transportation plan. It provided the opportunity to look at what Coweta had planned and how it would impact the City and County. Everyone needed to look at traffic long term. Data on projected growth was available, and regional action plans needed to be developed.

Learnard pointed out the City was part of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and Coweta County was part of the Three Rivers Regional Commission, asking if it could be an issue for any regional plans. Rorie said the City and Coweta County were in the same GDOT region, which was good. Fleisch asked if Coweta was part of the non-attainment area for air quality. Cailloux said Coweta was part of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, which was a federal designation, and were regulated by the same rules as Fayette County. Rorie said having both regional commissions working on the traffic issues would be beneficial.

Cailloux continued that the actions items for land use were to preserve the natural environment (stay the course, explore possible stormwater management incentives) and to develop and redevelop using the Village Concept (define types, redevelopment, annexation). Fleisch asked if there was ever a definitive answer regarding what the "village concept" was. Cailloux said there was not, and that was an action item. It did not mean the same thing everywhere or to everyone.

Frank Destadio (Planning Commission) said he had gone to most of the meetings on the Comprehensive Plan update, and there had been a great effort put into the plan update. However, he did not see any definitive comments on the quality of Lake Peachtree. He noted that the silt coming down Flat Creek was the real problem with the lake, and they needed to talk about how to slow down that process.

Ernst agreed, saying they had discussed it, but there was no plan. The situation needed to be fixed. Destadio said the siltation would continue if no plan was in place.

Cailloux discussed the Village Concept, noting the state used the term Character Area. One of the goals in Land Use was to define the types of villages, pursue Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) funding, and adopt architectural guidelines, especially along gateways and corridors. Activity centers were another way to look at the Village Concept. The commercial areas were different sizes, and some were regional attractors like the Walmart/Home Depot area, while others had more of a community feel such as Braelinn Village.

Federal transportation money was used to fund the LCI program run by the ARC, Cailloux said. The funds were given to a community to look at how land use was impacting transportation. Another short-term project was to adopt architectural guidelines, which could be different in different parts of the City or along gateways and corridors. Architectural guidelines would help further identify the different villages and village centers.

Redevelopment was another goal for land use. Cailloux said 10 areas had been targeted in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, asking if they were still appropriate areas for redevelopment. The 10 areas identified were Wynnmeade, Aberdeen Village retail, Westpark Walk retail, Willowbend Center, Huddleston Road, Lake Peachtree, Braelinn Village retail, Peachtree Crossing retail, Steven's Entry, and Peachtree Crossing. The focus should be on the vision or desired result of redevelopment for the areas, as well as appropriate incentives.

Rorie said he was more familiar with the work done at the Braelinn Village retail center, which was a good example. Kroger had been expanded, and there had been architectural updates. There had been some issues with tree removal and landscaping. He asked what would happen if K-mart closed and asked if another big box be recruited. Rorie said progress had been made in these areas since 2006, adding that the City should continue to look at what was happening in the retail centers.

Destadio asked what would happen if ClubCorp sold the private golf courses, asking if the City could handle that situation. The City's long-term vision should include what would happen if any of the golf courses were closed and what the City would want to see on the golf course properties. Prebor pointed out that these courses were different because the residential component was built around and through the courses.

Cailloux continued that, in 2014, an annexation study was done, and the areas considered for annexation included SR 54 eastward, Dogwood Trail northward, Wilksmoor industrial, and Starr's Mill southward. She said this also included coordination with adjacent jurisdictions. The Village Concept and step down zoning should be applied to future annexations. The idea of annexation was to clean up the City's borders, Cailloux said. They should look at what was rural and what was suburban to help clarify the borders.

The SR 54 East area included the Publix shopping center, Shiloh Village (mobile homes), Sumner Road, Governor's Row (office/commercial/undeveloped), Longboat/Genevieve (large lot residential), and Ebenezer Road (agricultural properties along the road).

Rorie said there should not be a piecemeal approach to annexation on SR 54 East, but a phased approach. If an area was urban, then it should be in the municipality. This area was developing as a separate village with residential and commercial components. Annexation should be a high priority to balance out the tax base.

Fleisch noted that two of the recent annexations, Heritage Assisted Living on SR 54 East and the day care center on SR 74 South, were due to failing septic systems. They were annexed because of the health code. There were several businesses in this area that were on septic systems, and she could see similar problems occurring as the businesses got older.

Cailloux said access to sewer would be a major attraction for these properties. They might not need it now, but if they wanted to maximize/increase the use of their property, they might not be able to do so because of a septic system. King said the Fitness Center spent $500 per year to maintain the septic system, but hooking up to sewer would cost $17,000.

King said he understood that a certain percentage of homeowners had to agree to annexation of a residential area. Cailloux said 60% of the property owners and 60% of the registered voters had to be in favor of an annexation.

The Dogwood Trail northward area included Crabapple Lane tracts adjacent to Kedron Hills, which was zoned R-22 (half acre minimum, three-fourths acre average); Dogwood Trail tracts; and Sims Roads tracts (connected to Astoria Lane tracts zoned R-43, one-acre lot size).

Rorie said there had been a request to annex the Dogwood Trail tracts, asking how the step-down zoning would apply. Usually the zoning requests that went along with the annexation requests were related to density issues. Either R-22 or R-43 would fit with the surrounding zoning. Cailloux said the most recent tactic used by developers was to look at the gross number of houses that would be permitted on a tract, condense the houses together, and leave a large area of undeveloped property. She said extending R-22 *ad finitum*, would be a continuous sprawl, and the idea of stepping down would provide an end in sight.

Ernst said the City should look long and hard at adding more residential because of the current tax base. Rorie said as the City expanded its borders, the service delivery had to change. Maintaining service levels was the idea behind looking at pockets/areas. It cost $1.5 million to add a fire station, and Rorie asked what sense it made to annex if the City had to add a fire station. They were looking at a 20-year defined footprint so staff could plan service expansions.

The Wilksmoor Industrial study area included the industrial tract next to the quarry in Tyrone, the agricultural zoned tract next to Cresswind, and islands contiguous to the City. Cailloux said the orphan islands in this area needed to be cleaned up. There were residential areas next to industrial areas. Rorie said there should be movement in this area over the next few years. They wanted to avoid making today's decisions tomorrow's problems. The City dealt with issues daily on the west side of the City because of the proximity of residential zoning to industrial and commercial zoning.

The Starr's Mill southward study area included the Redwine Road horse farms, Jefferson Woods subdivision, Mountbrook subdivision, The Chimneys, Millpond Manor, Brechin Park, and the New

Hope Baptist Church campus. Any movement towards GA 85 would need coordination with Fayette County and Senoia.

Fleisch noted that Brechin Park had a Senoia mailing address, and the Post Office had also wanted The Gates subdivision in the City to have a Senoia address. A petition to have a Peachtree City as The Gates' address had been approved.

WASA board member John Oakey commented that he owned land in two other counties, and a home that was on septic had to be on at least one acre because of septic tank issues. He asked if that was the same for Fayette County. Cailloux said it was, adding that Jefferson Woods, and other subdivisions in the County had one-acre lots. Fleisch noted that Mountbrook and The Chimneys were on sewer, saying that sewer for The Chimneys had been part of the sewer purchase and Mountbrook was on sewer due to the proximity to the Starr's Mill School Complex.

Rorie said there were areas in the City that had minimum one-acre lots based on the zoning and were designed for septic, which was not a good or bad thing. It was a decision people made. The lot size and soil type determined whether a lot would have a septic system.

Rorie said the budget for long-term sustainability of all City facilities came out of the Comprehensive Plan process, but it had not been driven by just that. Maintenance would be a highlight at the June 6 Retreat workshop. The City had not done a good job of explaining where the money had gone. They would look at how much it cost to expand services. If one mill in the City's budget was worth $2 million and the City spent $2 million per year on the cart paths, that was spent on something in this City that no other city had. The City had a master plan for the path system, and 13 of the SPLOST program projects were about extension and expansion of the system.

A huge issue for the cart paths was the south end connectivity, Rorie continued. Fayette County was working with GDOT on a County-wide multi-use path master plan. Rorie and City Engineer Dave Borkowski had spoken to the County Engineer about the GDOT project, particularly in the Redwine Road area.

The City needed to work with planning departments in other cities and counties, Rorie said. The City was a border town and felt the impacts from other common ground. Rorie said he had discussed joint planning between the City and the County with the County Administrator for common standards. As SR 54 East developed toward Fayetteville, working together was more important. Certain areas needed to be looked at long-term even if only an internal agreement level between the two planning entities.

Destadio said the update was a good plan. He wanted to emphasize one thing. Complete Streets (a program where streets were planned, designed, and operated for safe mobility for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit users) had come up at the last Steering Committee meeting. He did not know if Complete Streets was worth the effort, noting the City had a good staff and great transportation planning.

Cailloux said if Complete Streets was adopted, it could tie the City to the program. The Comprehensive Plan update suggested it be looked at. The ARC had said it was a conundrum whether the program would be appropriate in Peachtree City given the City's multi-use path system.

Fleisch thanked the Planning Commission and Water & Sewerage Authority (WASA) members for attending the meeting. She said over time there had been changes in Planning and at the airport, which led to changes to their agreement with the City. Due to recent developments, it was probably time to look at WASA and its relationship with the City.

King said there had been a letter-writing campaign three or four years ago, and there was one now. Whether the issues were perceived or real, there was an accountability problem with the citizens. With the amount of money spent on bonds, it was the citizens and WASA ratepayers paying for the bonds, so they should have a voice. Bringing WASA under City control was an emotional argument that was not very objective as to what needed to be done. There had been a conversation about having a study done to look at all the issues between WASA and the City. The lawyers on both sides were disagreeing about whether or not WASA had the capacity to go outside the City limits. This was not a new issue and had been going on a long time. They needed to put their heads together and fix this perception so everyone understood what was going on. The City was prepared to fund a study if everyone agreed. The attorney who helped with the lake agreement had been recommended, although his availability was not known. This was not just for Council, but also WASA and the citizens.

Prebor agreed, saying he was asked about WASA every day. There was a level of mistrust. Council had to work with WASA for the benefit of all the citizens because that was what they were here to do, and there was a perception they were not working together.

King said he had spoken with Oakey recently, and he had discovered some things from WASA's perspective that he had not considered. This could be fixed.

Ernst said one of the reasons he ran for Council was because of the dysfunction of the prior Council. They argued and could not work things out. This Council had fixed that, and he did not want to have that same dysfunctional attitude with any of the boards in the City.

Rorie asked Joan Young with FCDA to speak about economic development and the City's tax base. Young said it was a timely subject; they had to balance the tax digest and address the cost of services. There was a need to address sites. Peachtree City had an abundance of sites at one time, and the sites were running out. The FCDA had contracted with a site consultant, and they found the County was out of balance. If the sites were not preserved now, residential development would take over. The site consultant would make a presentation on May 17, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., at the FCDA office. She asked Council to attend.

Young noted that it was a double-edge sword. The FCDA had been very successful with the target industries of headquarters, aviation and aerospace, film and new media, data and data centers, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. They would provide jobs with good paying wages and create a capital investment that would bring in a good amount of taxes. There were three ways to do this. The first was lead generation and recruitment of companies that were a good fit. Step 2 was to beef up business retention, which was huge for the City. They were seeing those efforts pay off with existing industries. Step 3 was new projects, the traditional economic development of project managers from the state calling about companies wanting to relocate.

Young continued there had been $23 million spent on existing industry expansion projects during FY2017 that created 123 jobs. There were $100 million in new projects currently looking at the community that could bring a total of 936 jobs. Additional sites would be sorely needed if all the projects came to fruition.

There were several ways to address the lack of sites. There were spotty areas, and infill was one way to address the need. Infill worked, but it was not the easiest solution. Big boxes were great secondary resources, Young said. If there was an empty big box, she said she would look at recruiting technology companies, research and development companies, or innovation centers to fill the empty space. What might appear to be problem for the City could be a solution for the FCDA.

The FCDA was looking for more business locations for target industries. Annexation was another solution since the City could create what it wanted in an annexed area. Young continued they were also looking at joint development projects. There might be areas with land, but lacking sewer or the needed infrastructure. Joint partnerships were happening throughout the state, and municipalities were sharing the tax base, infrastructure, and land. There had been a tremendous uptick in interest in this community, and the FCDA did not want to tell a company it could not be accommodated.

Rorie asked about abatement strategies, noting that abatements were typical and included wins for both the business and the municipality. He discussed zoning, saying they were looking at the ability to add a Special Use Permit to the General Industrial (GI) category that would allow for lighter intensity uses. They were looking at how to infill the industrial park and to keep from having vacant buildings.

Young said tax abatement was a necessary evil. Companies were investing millions of dollars, and typically wanted more benefit up front where most of the costs were. They also wanted to see a community committed to them as well. She added she had never seen a company just relocate because they liked a community. There were negotiations and the art of the deal if they were going to be successful, Young said. The competition was global. Fayette County had to become more competitive if it was going to be successful.

Learnard asked what fixed the fact that residents had to bear the brunt of taxes. Young said it would get worse. People wanted to live in Fayette County because of the quality of life. The County had been so successful that It was very difficult to maintain an inventory of sites. Schools were located on major arteries on sites that would be good for a business. They needed to identify and preserve sites for business recruitment. The County recently lost a business because two nearby counties were willing to give the company the land. Communities were getting hungry, and Fayette County/Peachtree City would have to compete.

Rorie asked Young to define a quality job. Young said it had to be above the median pay, which was currently $19.81 per hour. A quality job was relative, but FCDA looked at pay scales. If a working person could not make a living wage, then they could not buy a home here. They were not making an investment in the community.

Rorie said there were competing interests. There was no right answer, only the opportunity to seek right answers and second right answers.

The workshop concluded at 8:05 p.m.

Pamela Dufresne

Pamela Dufresne, Deputy City Clerk

Vanessa Fleisch

Vanessa Fleisch, Mayor