

City Council of Peachtree City
Workshop Minutes
April 5, 2016

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met in workshop session on Tuesday, April 5, 2016. Mayor Fleisch opened the workshop at 6:30 p.m. Council Members attending: Terry Ernst, Mike King, Kim Learnard, and Phil Prebor.

The purpose of the workshop was to look at Citizen Engagement/Citizen Surveys Review & Assessments:

- One PTC-Community Assessment/Comprehensive Plan
- Needs Assessment Group
- 2016 Citizen Satisfaction Survey

City Manager Jon Rorie reminded Council and those attending the meeting that the reasons behind the Retreat workshop sessions was to take a broader look at the future in order to develop strategies for the City's challenges and focus on where the City was going. The February session had focused on Council's goals from 2015, what had been accomplished, and what remained. They looked at demographics at the March 1 session to see how the City had changed, as well as at housing, and land use plans. This workshop was designed to find out what the citizens thought. The citizens were not a distraction, but the reason everyone was here.

The purpose in looking at the surveys was to find out what the citizens needed and wanted, as well as what contributed to the quality of life. Rorie said he had been told in the past that things would be okay if he listened to the citizens to find out what was needed. Rorie said his response was always, "which ones?"

The presentations at this workshop were a snapshot of the various world views of the people who engaged and responded to the questions. The surveys did not necessarily meet any academic rigors, and the purpose at this meeting was to stir the imagination of what could be.

Senior Planner David Rast noted the One Peachtree City presentation had been originally presented to City Council in February 2012 in preparation for the update to the Comprehensive Plan. Prior to beginning the public input portion of One PTC, staff had gathered data from other cities with three goals in mind – to provide updated and factual information (realistic picture of the City), to solicit feedback from the community, and to gather data and engage the community.

One PTC had four open houses and a series of roundtable discussions. Rast said there were between 70 – 80 people at the open houses, and 50 – 60 participated in the roundtables. Issues looked at and discussed included aesthetics, growth and development, and budget.

Rast continued that one of the budget exercises used to help people understand how tax dollars were spent involved showing how much of each tax dollar went to the state, county, and local levels. In 2012, only 23¢ of each dollar a resident paid in property taxes went to the City. The participants were asked how tax money should be allocated among the various departments, and the average of the suggestions was to spend 27% on community aesthetics, 26% on public safety (fire and police), 26% on quality of life, 19% on growth and development, and 2% should be used for savings or a tax cut. The actual 2011 City budget showed 54% for public safety, 17% on community aesthetics, 14% on growth and development, 13% on quality of life, and a 2% shortfall.

The roundtable discussions were held following the workshops. Groups of eight – 10 met to discuss various topics, and staff had created visual "word clouds" to cover the comments made (with the size of the words corresponding to the frequency of the comment).

Rast said the first session's topic was what the participants liked and did not like about the City, and their vision for the Peachtree City of the future. The top things residents "liked" about the City included the sense of community, path system, safety, golf carts, green space, trees, and nature. The items that the participants "did not like" included the lack of outdoor events, no central gathering place, rental homes, vacant retail, maintenance of landscaping, and limited affordable housing options. Residents wanted more community events, a central gathering area, outdoor events, engagement, diversity, involvement, positive leadership, Drake Field, and a redefining of the master plan.

During Session Two, the participants discussed how they envisioned a city with balanced growth and the ability to maintain what they liked and valued. They also talked about housing needs and what made the City a desirable place to live. The word cloud for how to sustain what the City had included developing a vision statement and strategic plan, identifying volunteer opportunities, maintain and enhance, educate our citizens, empower the community, growth alternatives, provide factual information, analyze existing recreation facilities, consistent marketing efforts, and more.

Under how to maintain the City's natural resources, "maintain buffers" was the largest word in the word cloud. In addition, residents suggested developing maintenance standards for natural areas, maintaining stormwater system, removal of invasive plants, educating residents, master gardener program, tree replacement standards, bond referendums, Fayette County Extension Service, and more.

Important activities included the cart paths, fireworks, Library, running events and triathlons, community garden, farmers market, Fourth of July parade, Memorial Day, organized walks, the Fred, and the airshow. Participants also liked the Earth Day Festival, Peachtree City 101, Shakerag Arts and Crafts Festival, All Children's Playground, Dragon Boat races, and the Library's virtual reading program. Activities participants would participate in include events at City Hall Plaza, Drake Field, outdoor festivals, lunch on the lawn, lake access, the Fred, outdoor concerts, arts festivals, community signs, outdoor movies, village identification, wine tasting, international food festivals, neighborhood block parties, barbeque festivals, Battery Way Sunset Club, and more.

Topics in the housing options discussion included live, work, shop; neighborhood redevelopment; low to moderate income; maintenance; senior housing; infill residential; entry level housing, aging population; increased density; and rental property. Things that would make a positive impact on the community included path system maintenance, community garden, golf cart parking, golf cart charging stations, youth activities, bike lanes, expand path system, bike racks, youth activities, and more.

Session Three focused on the various groups and organizations that made up the community and the need to create a balance between the competing needs of these groups. They also discussed establishing a common ground regarding how people talked to each other, how to build community relationships, and how decisions were made.

Topping the list of how to notify residents of opportunities to participate were participate, get involved, unite, encourage, common website, special event signs, promote events, enable,

interest groups, be informed, and engage. Recommendations on how to encourage people to participate included identify volunteer opportunities, recognize volunteers, listen to their recommendations, community clean-up day, volunteer projects for communities, and more.

Participants were asked how to foster dialogue, and the answers included more roundtables, UPDATE (newsletter), morale, centralized calendar, accentuate the positive, social media, effective leadership, eclectic events, City website, communicate openly, block parties, online registration, radio, take ownership, City-sponsored on line newspaper, and local business expo.

Rorie asked how many people participated in total. Rast said approximately 120, with some people participating in both the open houses and roundtables.

Public Information Officer/City Clerk Betsy Tyler went over the results from the survey done by the Needs Assessment Committee chaired by former Mayor Don Haddix in 2013. Tyler noted that the committee was made up of residents either appointed by Haddix or volunteers. The report had been originally presented to City Council on May 7, 2013.

The mission of the Needs Assessment Committee was to determine citizen priorities for city services and to recommend the millage rate in the context of city revenue using objective methods. In addition to Haddix, the members included Robert Black, Josh Bloom, Phil Prebor, Allen Baldwin, John Dufresne, Steve Hamlin, Jack Joyner, Paul Lentz, Holly Machemehl, and Terrence Manning.

The members worked with a statistician on the survey, with the goal of having results that were statistically valid. The objective was to get 400 responses ($\pm 5\%$ margin of error) back out of the 1,200 participants who were randomly selected from approximately 12,000 residential addresses. They received 209 valid responses, which gave a margin of error of $\pm 7\%$. Tyler said the responses were also weighted by age to normalize the results. Weight was determined by dividing the percentage of the population by the percentage of respondents.

Per the survey, nearly 60% of the respondents felt the amount of property taxes they paid compared to the services they received were just right. Just over 30% felt taxes were too high, and the remaining 10% said taxes were either too low or they did not pay taxes.

When asked how well Public Works provided services for streets, medians, cart paths, subdivisions, and stormwater, between 75 – 80% of the respondents were satisfied.

The respondents were asked how much in additional property taxes they were willing to pay to complete new cart connection projects, and just over 30% were not willing to pay more taxes, just under 20% were willing to pay \$20, 20% were willing to pay \$30, and just over 30% were willing to pay \$60. Seventy percent of the respondents were willing to pay something extra to complete the connection projects.

When asked if they were willing to pay increased taxes to improve City services and where the money should be spent, between 25 – 30% were willing to pay more for improvements in police and fire services. Between 40 – 45% were willing to pay more for Public Works, between 30 – 35% were willing to pay more taxes for Recreation, and between 10 – 15 % were willing to pay more for improved Library services.

The respondents were asked to choose which of the following they preferred regarding property taxes (the percentage of opinions for each statement is in parentheses:

- I would accept an increase of no more than \$50 per year in my property taxes in order to increase/improve city services. **(Just over 50%)**
- I would accept an increase of no more than \$100 per year in my property taxes in order to increase/improve city services. **(Between 20 – 25%)**
- I want the city to lower property taxes by about \$50 per year and cut services where necessary. **(Between 15 – 20%)**
- I want the city to lower property taxes by about \$100 per year and cut services where necessary. **(Between 10 – 15%)**

Tyler said the Needs Assessment Committee had recommended Mayor and Council consider increasing the millage rate by up to 0.5 mills.

Rorie noted that Council would see a trend that continued through time, and the trend would continue with the 2016 survey results.

Frank Destadio said he had participated in One PTC, and until this workshop, he had not known what had happened to the results. He asked how the word could get out.

Caren Russell asked why the Needs Assessment Committee had made the decision to send their survey only to a randomly selected group. Tyler said it was to make the survey statistically valid. Russell said if they had wanted younger demographics the survey should have been sent to renters. They needed to figure out a way to get renters to respond.

Prebor, a member of the committee, said the members had spent many, many hours doing research, preparing the survey, and going over the replies. Dufresne, also member of the committee, said the reason the survey was only sent to 1,200 people was due to the limited budget the committee had. The members had consulted with a statistics professor and subject matter expert because they wanted the information collected to be valid, and the survey needed to be random based on the professor's advice. The committee members had designed the survey.

Tyler said both the surveys would be available on the website the next day, and the Needs Assessment information would be clearly marked as older data.

Tyler then turned to the 2016 Citizen Satisfaction Survey that had just been conducted. The purposes of the survey were to educate survey takers, measure satisfaction levels, and solicit input from citizens, according to Tyler. The City received 962 total responses (1,936 responded in 2011, and 2,077 had voted in the 2015 municipal election). Fifty-six percent of the responding households had no children (down from 63% for the 2011 survey). Only one percent of respondents had no internet service. Sources for City information had changed, with more people relying on the Peachtree City UPDATES. Local newspapers remained important, and Social Media had a strong showing (this was not a category on the 2011 survey).

Tyler continued that resident satisfaction with the web and City staff site remained high, but could be improved. Satisfaction with the Police Department, Fire Department, and Library also held strong. Services such as path paving and maintenance, City communication, stormwater maintenance, street paving, and the appearance along major roadways were all areas that could be improved. Overall traffic flow was the lowest ranking feature, with 42% selecting "Somewhat Dissatisfied" and 25% selecting "Dissatisfied." Residents also remained consistently satisfied with recreation facilities and hours of operation, but noted that those who felt there

could be more special events had risen from 7% to 22% since 2011, when 90% said the City had the right amount (78% selected "Right Amount" in 2016).

The survey had also asked participants what infrastructure was lacking in the City. While no single piece of infrastructure stood out, over 30% felt high-speed internet, cell phone connectivity, path connectivity, and an efficient road system could use improvement. Survey respondents continued to feel a high degree of safety in the community.

Tyler said the 2016 survey also included several questions related to seniors due to the aging population. Of those who indicated that there was at least one person living in the home age 50 or older (the age at which Fayette Senior Services accepts memberships), 54% indicated that Peachtree City needed additional leisure activities for senior residents. Ninety percent indicated they were not currently using Fayette Senior Services, with 76% indicating "Don't Know" about the variety of programs and hours for The Gathering Place and McIntosh Place. Of those who indicated another response, the majority indicated "Right Amount" for both.

The final section of the 2016 survey addressed community perceptions, with the vast majority of respondents rating Peachtree City as "Outstanding" or "Better than Other Places" as a place to live, raise children, retire, and for the overall quality of life. The City received lower markings as a place to eat out and shop. The highest ranked components contributing to Quality of Life were Peachtree City's low crime rate and the path system. The majority of respondents also felt the City was spending the right amount on City services, with more than half indicating that the path system and traffic flow should receive more funding in the next two years. Traffic and crime were the top two challenges expected in the next 10 years, and respondents concluded by indicating that the City should keep traffic as a priority in planning for the next 20 years.

Learnard said she was surprised that the numbers for frequent users of the City website had dropped (23% in 2011 to 20% in 2016). Tyler noted that the number of people who subscribed to the UPDATES had gone up. Learnard said they should talk about the website at some point.

Learnard was concerned that 70% of the respondents over the age of 50 answered "Don't Know" on questions about services for seniors. Tyler noted that Fayette Senior Services provided services and activities for people ages 50 and older, but most people that age were still working and did not use the services.

Rorie said that the City had more than 50 events each year, noting the word clouds in the One PTC presentation included "more City events." Rorie said he believed it was not the number of events that were the issue, but the types and quality of events the community wanted. Events ranged from runs, triathlons, craft shows, to dragonboat races.

Russell said the events should be advertised so people would know about them, adding people would travel from other areas for events. Once people came to the City for an event, they might consider moving here.

Ernst was concerned that 24% of the respondents felt "unsafe" on the path system due to accidents on the path system, adding the Police Department had greatly increased patrols on the cart paths over the last three years. Tyler said in the context of what the answers were in 2011, there had been good results due to that effort. King said it was the perception out there with kids driving fast on the paths. The concern was going down, which was the result of the efforts of the Police Department. They would never get rid of all the issues, but they were getting better.

Destadio said he did not think the concerns about accidents on the paths were in terms of the Police needing to patrol. Carts were getting faster and becoming more unsafe, and more young drivers were going a lot faster. Ernst agreed.

Lynne Lasher said there were some statistics missing from that piece, questioning whether there were more children on the path system. Lasher believed there were more teens using the paths than in 2011, and that was where the accidents came from. Ernst said that might be true, but there were fewer students in the schools. Tyler clarified the numbers included walkers, joggers, and cyclists who used the path system, and this was their perception. They were not saying there were more accidents; it was their perception of feeling unsafe from possible accidents.

Russell said more teens were using cellphones when driving carts, suggesting Council might want to consider an ordinance regarding cellphone use when driving a golf cart.

Rorie added that, these days, everyone was a citizen reporter by virtue of their phones. There had not been a rampant increase of crime in the community, but people were more informed of the crimes with photos on social media. This was an issue that would be discussed at the May 3 workshop. Police Chief Janet Moon confirmed that Part 1 crimes remained at the same rate as last year (533). Rorie added that Moon's presentation on May 3 would include a 10-year trend line of crime in the community.

King added that there was a theme about the City getting information to citizens in all the presentations. The City had to get ahead of social media.

Russell referred to leisure activities and older adults, noting there were two sets of senior citizens, and one set was very mobile. Different activities were needed for those who were more active.

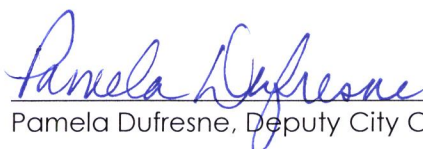
Destadio said he had lived in the City for 18 years, and it had continually been ranked as one of the "best places." That should be kept in mind. A large part of the population was between 40 – 60 years of age. The City needed to keep up with the times, but also needed to build on what was here and not make major changes.

The majority of respondents found the City's restaurant and shopping option were either the same as other cities or better than other places. Russell said the problem with restaurants and shopping in the City was the variety. The City was missing some things.

Learnard noted that only 20% of the respondents felt the City spent too much money on things. Rorie said people would say the City should not be managed by survey, and he agreed with that. However, the City should gather information, and even though the 2016 survey did not meet academic rigors, the results would lead to discussion.

Ernst verified the information presented at the workshop would be on the City website. He continued that people at the meeting had said this was the first time they had seen the 2011 information. He said that was one thing Council and staff were working on.

The workshop concluded at 8:11 p.m.


Pamela Dufresne, Deputy City Clerk


Vanessa Fleisch, Mayor