

**City Council of Peachtree City
Retreat Minutes
March 30-31, 2023**

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met for their annual retreat on Thursday and Friday, March 30 and 31, 2023, at 8:15 a.m., at Fayetteville City Hall. Attending were Mayor Kim Learnard and Council Members Frank Destadio, Clinton Holland, Mike King, and Phil Prebor, along with City Clerk Yasmin Julio, Executive Assistant Hannah Thomas, City Manager Robert Curnow, Assistant City Manager Justin Strickland, and Recording Secretary Martha Barksdale.

Robert Norton of Tenzinga Consulting conducted the retreat, beginning by working with the group to set ground rules that included treating each other with respect and observing confidentiality about what was discussed. The goals were to build a vision statement, develop core values, adopt a communication and behavior agreement, and build a stronger team. He set out the principles of engagement, which included the statement that Council and staff was a team working together for all constituents and that they needed to actively listen to one another. Norton's role was to run the agenda, assisting them if needed to reach a conclusion. Norton said he expected participation out of all attendees, then led them in an exercise in which they told the group about something of value that they had with them that day.

Next, he asked the group to each list what they missed about "yesterday" in Peachtree City. Items listed included the small-town feel, less traffic, activities for young families, and safer travel on the cart paths. Then Norton asked about what they wanted for the future and suggestions included creating a strategic plan, encouraging positive citizen engagement, redeveloping older areas, and improving traffic flow.

Peachtree City's uniqueness also came up in this discussion, so Norton wondered what that meant. People said it meant, firstly, the multi-use path network and ample green space. The village concept, which involved clustering neighborhoods around a central business and community area, instead of having a single downtown, was also mentioned.

Who invested in Peachtree City? Norton asked. The group agreed that the State, County, and Federal governments sent money, plus there were taxes from property owners and sales tax from shoppers, some of which was generated by tourism. The money that came in was used to build new facilities and update existing ones, to provide programming and fund events, and also to compensate employees.

The group then broke for lunch. The session resumed at 1 p.m. and the morning's participants were joined by Planning and Development Director Robin Cailloux, Public Works Superintendent Jonathan Miller, City Engineer Dave Borkowski, Fire Chief Clint Murphy, Police Chief Janet Moon, Financial Services Director Paul Salvatore, Recreation and Special Events Director Quinn Bledsoe, Human Resources and Risk Management Director Ellece Brown, Convention and Visitors Bureau Director Kym Hughes, and Library Director Jill Prouty.

After each person listed five things that were important to them personally and professionally, they divided into small groups to share. Items that were important to the City included education, traffic, reputation, and safety. The morning's discussion on uniqueness and investment were folded into this process, as well.

Norton explained how they could use the characteristics that they deemed important to come up with a short vision statement that Council and all City employees could use to guide their work. He said this was the hardest thing they would have to do during these two days. The vision should state what their

purpose was and how they could achieve it. The groups struggled with this task until the retreat ended for the day at 3:30 p.m. Norton asked them to think about it overnight, adding he was sure someone would have a brainstorm and come back with a great idea.

The entire group convened again Friday morning at 8:15 and, after breakfast, resumed work on the vision statement. After more deliberation, participants shared their new ideas, with most including the words "excellence" and "premier," with some incorporating "path" and "unique."

After about an hour of back and forth discussion, Strickland offered "ultimate service uncompromised excellence." Destadio said he liked that because it applied to the people who worked there and the citizens they served. Holland suggested just "uncompromised excellence," commenting that it spoke loudly about what they were trying to do. Prebor agreed, as did Learnard and King. It was decided that was it.

After a short break, Norton asked each person to give their definition of "uncompromised excellence," and said everyone's answer was great because it reflected what they thought.

Then, they moved back to the area where the core values had been posted the day before. Each core value would become a guiding principle they could use every day as they fulfilled the vision of uncompromised excellence. They decided on professionalism, accountability, sustainability, teamwork, integrity, and safety. The participants were divided into groups to come up with definitions.

"Accountability" was defined as "we will accept and expect personal responsibility for our words, decisions, and actions." "Sustainability" was "We will provide services that assure ongoing organizational, financial, and environmental preservation to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future." "We will safeguard our community, people, and property," was the definition of "Safety" as a core value.

"Teamwork" was defined as "We will communicate, collaborate, and unify around common goals," while "Integrity" was "We will provide full transparency from policy through implementation." "Professionalism" was decided to be "We will demonstrate knowledge and competence in our work, respect for others, and dedication to ethical behavior."

The group that defined "safety" proposed a change. Moon said the Police Department used the acronym EPIC—excellence, professionalism, integrity and collaboration for their core values, and she thought it was helpful. She proposed changing "integrity" to "honesty," so the acronym could be PATHSS—professionalism, accountability, teamwork, honesty, sustainability, and safety. The values would be easier to remember in acronym form, the Chief stated, and the group agreed.

Fayetteville Mayor Ed Johnson and City Manager Ray Gibson dropped in to welcome the Peachtree City group. Johnson said retreats were always productive for them, and he hoped Peachtree City was finding theirs productive, as well. Gibson said retreats helped them iron out issues and work together as the city grew. Johnson went on to describe the great relationship between all the mayors of Fayette County, saying they gathered once a month to share information.

Julio thanked them for opening their meeting space for the retreat.

Next, Norton wanted to create a communication/behavior agreement that would take things that were subjective, like gossip, and, by defining the behavior, make them something employees could work on. Instead of telling someone to improve their attitude, they could remind the person to be open-minded, optimistic, and flexible.

Norton presented listings describing behaviors that could be part of the city's communication/behavior agreement and asked the group to select 10 that they felt were most important. All employees and Council Members would abide by this in how they behaved towards each other. They would then review everyone's selections and decide on a collective top 10 for inclusion.

After discussion, 12 behaviors were selected:

- Maintain dignity, respect, and confidentiality
- Keep healthy humor alive and maintain a professional environment
- Be optimistic, open-minded, innovative, and flexible
- Praise and recognize achievements in genuine, simple ways
- Balance face to face communication with written communication
- Do what is ethical regardless of the consequences
- Be dedicated to excellence in our performance, fulfill our responsibilities and "get it done"
- Address conflict before it escalates, contacting the other party directly, rather than working around him/her/them
- Deliver excellent customer service to one another and to those we serve outside the department
- Publicly one (supportive)
- Be supportive of one another at work and back each other up
- Learn/Teach—if you don't know it, learn it; if you do know it, teach it

Norton recapped this, saying what they had created had to be dynamic; they needed to use it every single day. They needed to figure out how to roll this out so every employee would buy into it. He asked all the department heads to think about how to present it to their employees. He thought Council should start every internal meeting with the vision statement. It should become part of the culture. The guiding principle and core values could be made into a checklist to be used for every decision. The communication/behavior agreement could help department heads ensure their employees were on the right path. Council should make it part of everything they did.

What would a rollout look like? He thought a video featuring employees was a great idea as was a celebration of what they were doing going forward. He recommended that each department meet with their employees before this was rolled out.

Prouty said the City picnic in May would be a great opportunity for the rollout, and the others agreed. It should be in the city newsletter, too. Moon said there should be swag given out at the picnic to reinforce the vision statement. Prebor said it should be posted in the weekly Update for citizens. Curnow suggested they create laminated sheets with the vision statement at the top, followed by the core values. This would be a visual reference they could use anytime. Prouty suggested it be used as a screensaver on the City computers. Maybe it could be made into plaques to hang on the wall. Destadio said he wanted citizens to see it at meetings. Miller suggested the vision statement be incorporated into the Public Works uniforms, and Strickland said they could put it on the trucks, too.

Norton explained other cities had put the vision statement, the core values and the behavior standards on foam board and asked every employee to sign it. Every new employee would have to sign as part of their onboarding process. Strickland said he wanted every new employee to watch the video they were going to make. King said he wanted the vision statement to be the first thing people saw when they visited the City website.

Norton said they had a lot to do if they wanted to roll this out at the picnic. He said he would love to

have each Council member take one thing and share it. The more people that were involved in the process, he remarked, the more the program would be accepted and become part of the culture. He added that what they had done was historical. They were setting standards that could guide the City for at least the next 10 years. What was important was that they leave as one voice, enthused about what had been accomplished over these two days.

Norton showed an example of the signature board he was talking about. The city that did it had eight locations where the boards were, and every employee signed every board. He showed a video that a fire department in Florida had created to share its vision and core values. Norton called attention to how many employees were involved, saying that is what Peachtree City needed to do.

He closed by asking each person to state one thing they got out of the previous two days. Answers mostly stated the importance of having a unified vision of expectations. Norton told them they were a great team as long as they worked together.

After dismissing for lunch, Norton gathered Council, the City Clerk, City Manager, and Assistant City Manager for one more session. Council said they enjoyed the opportunity to work with Staff, and Norton emphasized the importance of them presenting a united front with each other and with Staff. Council's job was to set policy, and the City Manager's job was to make sure it was implemented.

Norton told them he was always available any time they needed him. King suggested he return to meet in 10 months, when there were new Council Members. Norton said he was thinking more about two months, so they could all get started on a strategic plan. He could return later to help get the new Council Members up to speed.

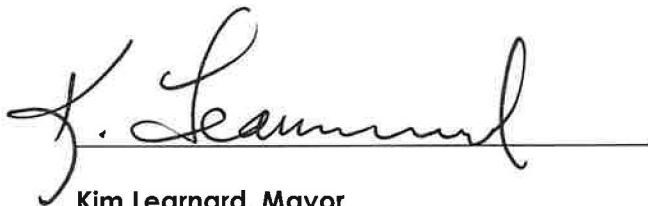
He asked them if they enjoyed the retreat and were the goals met of building a vision statement, developing core values, adopting a communication and behavior agreement, and building a stronger team? They all agreed they got a good start.

Curnow noted their work over these two days would help create a good road map for the future. Norton suggested they conduct a survey as they began the process of creating a strategic plan. He said they needed internal surveys in addition to citizen surveys.

The retreat ended at 1:34 p.m.



Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary



Kim Learnard, Mayor