

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 8, 2023
3:00 PM

Call to Order

The City Council of Peachtree City met in a special called workshop on Thursday, June 8, 2023. Mayor Kim Learnard called the workshop to order at 3 p.m. Others attending: Frank Destadio, Clinton Holland, Mike King, and Phil Prebor.

Discussion Items

A. Short Term Rental Discussions

Planning and Development Director Robin Cailloux noted that Council last discussed the Short Term Rental (STR) Ordinance in May. Since then, she had read over the notes from the meeting and reviewed the video.

Prebor broke in to comment that they had never had a vote to see if Council was even in favor of having an ordinance regarding STRs. Learnard said there were currently STRs in Peachtree City and, while they were unregulated, they were not disallowed. She said Prebor could make a motion if he wished.

Prebor moved to ban short term rentals. Holland seconded. Destadio said he felt it deserved discussion, noting that they could ban these rentals, but if it went to court, there was precedents in Georgia Courts for an ordinance to be overturned.

Learnard said she wanted to start with the disclosure that she owned a rental property in Michigan. It was a small bungalow in an established residential neighborhood. The Mayor explained that she and her husband stayed there when they visited family, but they rented it through Air BnB when they were not there.

She said she wanted to relate information from some of the guests who had rented her house in the year they had owned it. One family used it while their own home was under renovation. Prebor asked if it was for 30 days? Learnard said less than 30 days. Another renter was a medical student who was doing a rotation in Detroit, and another was a group traveling for a child's soccer game. Learnard said several had been people who were moving to the area and needed somewhere to stay until they could get into their own houses.

In short, she continued, people used STRs for a variety of reasons, and Learnard said she believed, with appropriate regulations, they provided a needed service. She also pointed out that she hired local people to do the housekeeping, shovel snow, and mow the lawn. She hired a local teen to roll the trash can to the curb every week. She said she had never had any thefts, vandalism, or complaints from neighbors.

Learnard added that there were already STRs in Peachtree City, and they provided a valuable and needed service. Instead of banning them outright, she felt they needed a discussion of what would be appropriate regulations.

Destadio remarked that he had received emails from people who had rented out their basements and made so much money they decided to buy second or even third homes. That was more than an STR. There needed to be regulations on these businesses, and Learnard agreed.

Outright banning these rentals would not be representative to the current owners of STRs, King commented. He did not know how many they were, but they were property owners, and he would side with them. Banning them would be a disservice, and King said it was taking an easy way out. He noted that Council acknowledged two or three years ago that STRs existed, but they needed to make them safe.

Right now, Prebor remarked, Peachtree City was 25% rentals. Atlanta was 58%. He pointed out that when someone bought a house and turned it into an Air BnB, it was no longer a home; it was a hotel. He said there was a house in his neighborhood where the owner was rooming underage kids. That owner had moved on and now it was an Air BnB. Now the neighbors did not know who was in there, and Prebor said they had come to him to complain that they did not want to live next to a hotel.

Also, he continued, this would drive up the value of homes because people were making a lot of money. That trend could drive out the young families that wanted to move here. The houses were expensive already, and now this would increase the prices.

Learnard said she thought there were 1,760 rental units in Peachtree City out of 12,600 households. The Census tracked rentals, Cailloux stated, and part of that 25% was apartment units. But that meant there were still single-family homes being rented.

Holland said he supported protecting the rights of property owners, but he did not like the idea of tenants next door changing on a daily basis. He, too, stated that he believed this would place houses out of the reach of new families coming to the city. The prices would go up because they were now investment properties. This was called "displacement" in the industry, and Holland said he did not want to see it in Peachtree City. He felt that these investors did not have the same values as homeowners who lived in the city. There were hotels for people who needed places to stay for a few days, he asserted.

However, he continued, he understood there were property rights. He really did not want short-term rentals, but if they must be allowed, he would support tight regulations. They needed to understand what the courts would uphold. What was a residence? How did the law define an STR?

The Mayor called for the vote. The motion was to completely disallow STRs in Peachtree City. The motion was denied, with Prebor and Holland voting in favor, and Destadio, King, and Learnard voting against.

Learnard said Council had a list from a previous workshop of what they wanted in an STR ordinance. They would tick through that after Cailloux's presentation.

Cailloux explained that she was using the Power Point from the last workshop, with changes or additions in red. They would still require a permit, and no detached structures could be rented on a short-term basis, nor could recreational vehicles (RVs).

The maximum number of STRs in the city would be 5%. That number was based on the Tax Assessor's report of the number of single family residential properties that were taxed. In Peachtree City, that was about 12,600, and 5% of that was around 630. Cailloux noted other communities in Georgia had settled on 5%, and it had stood the test in Georgia courts. Subleasing would not be allowed.

These items remained the same: all parking off the street must be on a paved surface; garbage screened from view; only bedrooms could be used for sleeping with a maximum of three persons per bedroom. They kept the requirement that no special events or parties would be permitted. The City's noise and parking requirements would have to be posted on-site. They had removed the requirement that the STR owners would be required to keep a guest register

of names and vehicles.

The telephone number of a local contact person must be posted. That person must be at least 21 year old, able to respond to calls 24 hours a day, and be on-site in an hour or less.

As for application requirements, Cailloux said they kept the Fire Marshal inspection, the Code Enforcement/building code inspection, and payment of local lodging tax. The requirement for an occupational certificate was removed.

Cailloux listed the items the Fire Marshal mentioned at the last meeting that he would look for during the inspection. There would be a checklist, so property owners would be aware of the requirements. It would include fire extinguishers, interconnected smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, safe outdoor cooking procedures, safe means of egress, and no extension cords used for permanent wiring.

The Code Enforcement inspection would check out pool barriers and hot tubs; establish the maximum occupancy for bedrooms; ensure there was paved parking and garbage storage that met the requirements. House numbers and all STR requirements must be posted, and the inspector would make sure the property maintenance code was adhered to.

A background check would be conducted on property owners, ensuring that they had no felony convictions in the past five years and no municipal convictions, except for traffic, in the last two years. Information on the contact person would be mailed to all neighbors within 500 feet, and it would be re-mailed when that person was changed.

They were still keeping the three strike policy, but the first citation had been changed from \$500 to \$1,000. The second citation remained at \$1,000. The third strike also carried a \$1,000 fine, but the permit would be revoked for 24 months. The owner and the contact person would not be able to apply for a new permit anywhere in the city for 24 months.

Those were the changes, Cailloux said, observing that the checklist worked well at the last meeting, so she had updated it with the revised ordinance requirements. The Mayor said she thought it was a good idea.

Learnard said when they got their permit for their house in Michigan, they filled out a form online and paid \$125 for two years. An inspector came out to walk around the exterior of the house and signed off on the permit. That seemed to be working well for them, and she said it was because owners had a vested interest in making sure their properties were clean and safe. The free market would take care of itself. Peachtree City had noise ordinances, nuisance ordinances, parking requirements, and she thought enforcement of those, along with reasonable requirements in the STR ordinance, would keep everyone safe without over-regulation.

How many families could stay in a house per night? Prebor asked, and Cailloux replied that legal had advised them not to define "family." Could several different groups stay there under individual contracts? Prebor continued.

Cailloux asked if he was talking about renting out bedroom A to one person, bedroom B to another, and so on? She said they could, but the Code Enforcement inspection would be making sure there were no exterior locks on interior doors, so lockable bedrooms could not be provided to different renters. But if they added doors leading to the outside, they could have exterior locks, Prebor noted, and rent them out.

Destadio asked about 917.5, which dealt with permits. He reflected they were near College Park and other places that had drug problems with STRs often when corporations purchased multiple houses for STRs. This ordinance said an officer of a corporation could be one of the

points of contact, Destadio stated, but he did not want corporations buying houses for STRs and thought the ordinance should prohibit that.

Would that be legal? Learnard wondered, and City Manager Robert Curnow told her staff would need to consult with City Attorney Ted Meeker. King said he thought if they allowed STRs, they could not prohibit any entity from buying a home and exercising that right. Destadio said he wanted it verified with the City Attorney; there were places in College Park, he remarked, where corporations could not own STRs.

There were enforcement issues right now in College Park, Learnard remarked. She stated that the whole point of designating a representative over 21 who could be there within an hour was to ensure there was a physical, local contact. Prebor asked if that person be a property manager? If so, did they have to have a real estate license?

Cailloux said there were license requirements for property managers, but they would not apply in this case. You could hire a property manager, but you could also assign your son to be the local contact and not a property manager. She asked Destadio if he wanted to ban all types of businesses from ownership, such as corporations, limited partnerships, LLCs? and he said he did. Learnard noted that sometimes individuals might form an LLC for an added level of protection for insurance.

No one had any more questions, so the Mayor said they would proceed with the checklist. The first item asked if existing STRs would be grandfathered in, and the answer was that they would not: they would have to apply for a permit. The list clarified that one permit was required per property, and that annual renewals were required. The STR did not have to be the owner's primary residence. Whole house rentals were permitted.

The list went on to say that the STR period was one day to 30 days. Guest houses or other detached structures could not be used. Subleasing was not allowed.

Prebor said he would like to go through the items individually, and Learnard replied that she just read through a bundle. Did he disagree with any of them?

Holland noted there was no business license requirement other than a permit. He asked how an STR would differ from someone who made and sold jewelry on the Internet from their home? They had to have a license. STRs needed to be licensed, too, so the City knew what was going on. Prebor agreed, adding that he would create an LLC if he wanted to open an STR. At that point, he should have to get a business license.

King said a business owner could create an LLC and include their private home as an option. This discussion was getting out in the weeds, he remarked. Prebor said he did not understand. King replied that he was tired of talking about this; it had been going on for two years. He knew they had a split Council, with some wanting to deny STRs entirely. He did not want to over-regulate.

Learnard said she would say "no" on a business license.

City Clerk Yasmin Julio pointed out that Peachtree City did not have business licenses; they did occupational tax licenses. Someone who operated a business out of their house would get a home occupational tax license.

Holland asked if that was in this ordinance? Learnard reminded him it was removed at the last workshop. Julio said if you wanted to use the term "business license" in the State of Georgia, you had to have a business license somewhere in the state and could operate in multiple locations. They would not have to get one specifically for Peachtree City.

Holland said that did not preclude them from getting an occupational license for tax purposes. That way, the City would know who was doing what. Prebor asked what that cost? Cailloux said \$100 to \$150. Learnard said there was staff burden to consider. She asked Destadio his thoughts, and he said he saw no need to require an occupational tax license.

Prebor questioned the item about rental of detached structures, and Learnard said the City already had an ordinance prohibiting this.

Cailloux said they were trying to be consistent with the current ordinance, and Prebor asked her why they said someone could not rent out their guest house? She said it was an old ordinance. You could have detached structures only in certain zoning districts with large lots. If you had them, you had to meet certain requirements, one of which was that it could not be rented out. She said she believed the intent was to prevent extra density in these areas.

Did they want to change it? Prebor asked. Cailloux commented that it could be changed so that if someone got an STR permit, they could rent a guest house. They would not have to change the other ordinance regarding long-term rentals.

Holland said it went back to not requiring the owners to live in Peachtree City. An investor could come in and buy 10 houses as STRs. He thought young people should not have to compete with investors or corporations if they wanted to buy in Peachtree City. He did not want to see corporations come in and destroy the values the City was built on.

The Mayor thanked him for his comments, and Holland asked if he could get a “yes” or “no” from the others? Prebor said that is what they were looking at. Holland said it was a different issue, and he thought the City Attorney should look at it.

Could he live in a guest house and rent the main house? Prebor wondered. Cailloux said he could not under the current ordinance. No one was supposed to permanently reside in a guest house. Destadio said someone had approached him with that scenario.

Learnard again stated the ordinances prohibited living in an accessory building, and she thought they should stick with that.

Curnow request that, as they went through the list, they reach a consensus on each item so he and staff would know if the majority of Council wanted these items in the final ordinance.

The first few items listed were fine, and Learnard said they could check with the City Attorney regarding if the STR owner had to live on the property. The proposed ordinance said they did not. Curnow said it meant they did not have to live in Peachtree City.

Primary residence, Cailloux explained, meant you had gotten a homestead tax exemption on that property. It did not mean you were on the property at the time; you could stay in Michigan for the summer, for example, but come back to Peachtree City in the winter and declare that house as the primary residence.

Learnard said the issue was if you lived elsewhere in Peachtree City; that would be permitted, Cailloux stated. If they changed the item in the list to a “yes,” Holland said, they would need to be a resident in Peachtree City.

What if someone had two homes on the lake? Destadio asked. Could they rent one as an STR and live in the other? Cailloux said they could not do that if they changed that answer to a “yes.” As it was currently written, they could.

Holland said he would have no problem with that, but he did not want someone who lived in another city to have STRs in Peachtree City. Holland stated he wanted a requirement that said you had to own and live in one property in Peachtree City. If that was the case, he was okay

with someone owning multiple properties. This was their city, and they needed to take care of it, he remarked.

So, the Mayor asked, he wanted Meeker to look at whether they could require STR owners to be Peachtree City residents? Holland said they could check to see if they had a homestead tax exemption for a property in Peachtree City. Cailloux said they could do that; having a homestead exemption meant the owner claimed it as their primary residence.

Learnard clarified that Holland wanted this item on the checklist changed to “yes,” which would mean someone with an STR in Peachtree City could not live in Sharpsburg or Fayetteville; they had to have a residence in Peachtree City.

He said he definitely wanted to have that requirement because he said it was “our city.” Learnard told him she got it with the grandstanding, but Holland said he was not grandstanding.

Council would ask the City Attorney to check on the legal requirement that the owner of an STR property be a Peachtree City resident.

The next item said that a whole house rental was permitted. The STR period would be a maximum of 30 days.

Next, it said that a guest house or other detached structure could not be used, and Prebor said he thought if a person had a guest house, they could rent it out. Holland agreed because they would be residents.

Learnard told Prebor that, as someone who did not want proliferation of short-term rentals, she thought he would want it to remain as a “no.” Prebor said he was trying to be a team player. If the team said they wanted to allow STRs, they should allow them in guest houses, too.

Learnard said she did not support that. She asked Holland, who also said he was against STRs, but Council’s vote the allow them was 3-2. He said he saw no reason why they should forbid STRs in guest houses, since they were owned by the same person who owned the main house, and that person must be a Peachtree City resident.

King also said they should be able to rent them, and Destadio agreed.

Council agreed that subleasing should not be allowed.

The proposal stated STRs should be a maximum of 5% of all residential in the city, and Learnard stated that she felt that was high, but it would be okay for a start. They could re-visit it in six months or a year if they felt it necessary. Holland and Prebor also said they thought it was too high, with Holland suggesting they start low and see what happened.

The Mayor asked what other cities did? Cailloux responded that the only maximum she saw was 5%. She said 1% would be 126 houses. Learnard proposed 2.5%, but King pointed out that they did not know how many they had now.

Cailloux stated she had been meeting with third-party monitoring contractors about various issues, and it seemed that there were 96 to 100 STRs in Peachtree City right now. That was less than 1% of all houses.

Holland said a limit of 1.5% to 2% would be a good start. Destadio said it could always be raised. Prebor and Holland said 1.5%, and Council agreed.

They agreed that parties or special events would not be permitted. Guest registries were not required. Destadio then asked why they could not use the information the person who wanted

to rent had submitted to the property owner? Learnard replied that the owner knew who they were renting to, but should they have to disclose that information to the City? She also noted that Air BnB expressly prohibited parties. Destadio said that answer was satisfactory.

However, Holland noted that when you rented a room in a hotel, you had to show a driver's license and a credit card with your name on it. Why would they not want to do this for STRs? It would protect the owners.

They did, Learned replied. What the ordinance was saying was that the owner was not required to disclose the personal information of their guests to the City. King said the City did not want to be responsible for safeguarding that personal information.

Holland said he understood, but was concerned about trafficking and thought the Police Department would want to know the identity of that individual. Learnard said it could be tracked because every owner knew who had rented the property.

Could they require the owner to get that information? Prebor inquired, but Learnard asked how they would enforce that?

Curnow pointed out that if you were using VRBO or one of the other rental platforms, it was required that you submit your information. A guest register in this situation would be a registry that was available at that house so that if the Police were to show up, they would know who was actually staying there. Without a registry, the Police would have to contact the owners to find out who was staying there.

Not everyone used those internet platforms, Holland stated.

Prebor began to ask Assistant Police Chief Matt Myers about this, but Cailloux stated that part of the ordinance dealing with collecting the State lodging tax said the owners had to sign an affidavit saying they were using a platform that collected that lodging tax. If they were not using an approved platform, they could not obtain an STR permit at all.

Myers said it was often difficult to get answers from the various platforms, and he had discussed this with Cailloux. They were trying to remedy this through the ordinance by the requirement that a local person be on call. If they required it in the ordinance, Cailloux pointed out, then the City could tell the owners they had to provide it if needed. If it was not in the ordinance, the City could not force them to do so, even if they had the information.

So they wanted to require it, Holland stated, with Prebor concurring.

What form would that guest registry take? Learnard wondered, noting that the owners would already have all that information. Prebor said they wanted to make it so the owners had to tell the City if asked. The question then, Learnard said, was whether they could put the onus on the property owner to provide this information for guest safety purposes?

Myers added that a guest registry would be the easiest way for the Police to get information if needed. They had no means of holding a STR platform accountable. Asking owners to make guest information available would be consistent with other City ordinances, Myers added, but they should check with the City Attorney, also.

They would not require a telephone landline. A business license would not be required, Learnard read, but Holland said that had been discussed, but no consensus reached. Learnard said the occupational tax should not be required because a permit process had been established. Prebor said he thought they needed it, but King and Destadio did not.

Everyone agreed that lodging tax should be collected and that the structure meet current fire and building codes. However, Learnard said property owners had a vested interest in keeping

things safe and in order, but if they wanted to require annual inspections, they should be prepared when budget time came. The Fire Department did not have manpower to go out and do 200 inspections. It would be 96, Holland noted, but, in any case, Learnard said they should be prepared to man up.

Other items of agreement were on-site parking and no garbage visible from the street. Notification to neighbors within 500 feet was, in Learnard's view, "an outrageous invasion of privacy," that would also require City staff time.

King said he thought the property owners should have to do the notifications. Learnard commented they could not hold the property owners responsible, but Holland said they could if it was in the ordinance and thought 500 feet might not be enough.

Learnard said she was a "no" on notification; Prebor and Holland were "yeses," while King and Destadio were "noes."

They agreed on the requirement that there be a local contact agent who could be on-site within an hour. The next said that the STR permit be posted on-site, and Cailloux said the local contact number would be on that permit. Council was okay with that.

They all agreed on the fines for violations that Cailloux had outlined earlier, as well as the \$400 annual application fee and the \$75 late fee. How did they come up with that amount? Prebor asked.

Cailloux noted there would be two inspections that took an hour or more for \$100 each, plus the cost of a third-party contractor to help monitor these, which would be at least \$7,000.

Holland asked if that included the cost of enforcement, such as visits, over the course of a year? Cailloux said it should balance out, but if the Police had to visit a "bad seed" frequently, it would not. But that was why they included the three strikes, you're out policy.

That completed the list, the Mayor stated. She asked Curnow if he had questions. Curnow said he and other staff had been taking notes, and it seemed to him they should do one more draft and bring it back to another workshop where they could talk about it. They would need to get with the Attorney on a couple of items then set a date for the workshop.

Learnard said they would move on to the budget presentation, but Holland had more questions. What would happen if a homeowners association (HOA) banned STRs? Then they were banned, the Mayor told him. Cailloux said the City could not override an HOA; those were private contracts. Holland said he had more questions, but could hold them.

B. FY - 2024 Budget Discussions

Curnow said the City Charter required the City Manager to propose a budget, and this was a glimpse of the methodology he was using. He reviewed the Vision and Core Values that Council and staff created during a two-day retreat in March. The vision of Uncompromised Excellence was something he said would carry through the presentation.

The City's main priority, he continued, was to maintain existing service levels in all departments through a budget endorsed by Council. This was done by creating a baseline service level. If they took on a new initiative, a new revenue source would be identified to pay for it.

Curnow said he looked at three areas of maintenance: financial sustainability, operational sustainability, and environmental sustainability. Peachtree City was not immune to inflation, and the majority of contracts that had come before Council over the past few months carried

significant cost increases.

Cost increases were based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which right now was about 5.5%. Curnow gave an example of buying a piece of technology with a five-year lifespan. The initial cost would be X, and he would buy a maintenance contract every year to keep it up to date. That contract would be subject to a 5.5% cost increase every year.

Peachtree City was seeing some extremely high increases in some of the necessities. Paving costs were up 50% due to increases in material costs. Vehicle costs were up about 30%. A lot of these contracts required they get in very early, sometimes as much as two years before taking delivery of the equipment.

He showed an example of cost increases on a contract from December, 2021, for a ton of asphalt at \$66.45 a ton. One year later that asphalt was \$85.75 a ton, a 29% increase. That didn't include, of course, the cost of labor in putting the asphalt down. If labor was added in, it would be a 55% increase. They put this budget together assuming these cost increases would continue.

Fire Chief Clint Murphy attended a conference where they talked about Public Safety construction cost increases, Curnow stated. Those were up 55% over the past three years, which could be compounded to about a 65% increase. Council discussed the construction of Fire Station 86 in 2022, at which time the cost was estimated at \$4.1 million. Architectural and engineering design was not quite finished, Curnow continued, but the price was approaching \$6 million at this point. It was pricing itself out of being feasible. They had already scaled down from having administrative offices in that station to making it just a response and support location.

In 2021, Council looked at a cost estimate for an addition to the Police Department at \$1.9 million; now it was \$3.5 million. That did not include \$500,000 for a generator to take care of the entire building.

Technology costs were projected to go up. This year they were realizing the cost of moving to Office 365, a cloud-based storage system with mandatory annual subscriptions. They were estimating technology cost increases of 30% in fiscal year (FY) 2024. Cybercrime was becoming more prevalent and requiring more layers of protection to prevent intrusion. Each layer required a maintenance contract that increased in cost each year. However, the recovery costs of getting back from an data breach was typically in the millions of dollars. If personal information was taken, the City had a duty to provide identity protection, which could be costly.

Assistant City Manager Justin Strickland explained the funding theory the City used, giving credit to Financial Services Director Paul Salvatore for putting the presentation together. The theory was that the City's most critical operations should be funded by its most stable source of revenue, which was the ad valorem, or property, tax. Public Safety was considered critical. Ad valorem taxes were controlled by Council and could be increased if property values declined. Council had no control over sales tax revenues.

He presented a chart showing the pattern of property tax revenue over the past 10 years compared to the expenses of Police and Fire. The goal was for Public Safety expenses to be almost the same as the ad valorem tax revenue. There was a gap in 2013 as the recession was winding down, but things were stable until 2022. In 2022, Council approved a full millage rollback of .189 mill, and Public Safety expenses began to outstrip revenues due to inflation.

If Council decided on a .1 mill reduction for FY 2024, the gap between revenues and expenses would widen. He showed a graph representation of that scenario. The full rollback of 2021-22

left them about \$100,000 short, at about 93% coverage. This year they were at 92.1%, and with a .1 mill rollback, they would be about \$2 million short and at 91% of full coverage for Public Safety in FY 2024. A .1 mill reduction, based on the average home value of \$446,000, was about \$17.83 per year for the homeowner. A .2 mill reduction would double the gap and the amount of savings. Strickland clarified that the amount of savings would be different for every house because they were not all at that exact value.

He explained that Salvatore had talked with the County Tax Assessor's office and, based on the initial digest estimates, a full rollback would be .577 mill. The revenue would stay flat, except for new growth, and the gap between Public Safety expenditures and property tax collection would grow to about \$4 million, taking it to 84% of funding for Public Safety from property taxes. On that \$446,000, there would be an annual savings to the homeowner of \$102.93.

More of Salvatore's research showed that there were indications nationwide that the housing market was starting to turn, with home sales and prices starting to decrease. Fayette's property values were assessed as of January 1, so this trend was not showing up yet. Using this information, Salvatore had created a worst case scenario, Strickland stated, using a full millage rollback of .577 in FY 2024 to show what would happen in FY 2025 if the housing values declined by 5% like they did in 2013. There would be a gap in Public Safety funding and revenues of \$6.8 million, with 74% funding through property taxes.

They took those numbers and looked to see what it would take to get back to full funding, and Strickland showed that it was pretty much the opposite of a full rollback. It would require a rollup of .577 mill. That did not mean staff was recommending that mill increase, he stated, but wanted to show what it would take to break even.

Strickland said he was moving to his own research, which was what did it cost to live in Peachtree City and what did taxpayers get for their tax money? Peachtree City did have the highest millage rate of any municipality in Fayette County, but Strickland said he wanted to point out all the services funded by those taxes.

Also, he presented a bar graph that showed each municipality and all taxes they paid. In unincorporated Fayette County, you paid county taxes for maintenance and operations (M&O), Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) taxes, plus a County 911 tax, which every jurisdiction paid. In Peachtree City, taxpayers paid only the County M&O, City taxes, and 911. Tyrone and Brooks paid all those, along with Fire and EMS. Peachtree City provided its own Fire and EMS services, while Fayetteville provided Fire, but not EMS. When you looked at all that, Strickland remarked, Peachtree City had a lower millage rate than these other municipalities.

Taxes on a \$446,000 property in Peachtree City would be \$5,403.20. About 66% went to the School Board. About 20% went to Peachtree City, and 13% went to the County.

Strickland also showed the total tax bills for a \$446,000 property in Fayette's jurisdictions. Tyrone's was the most expensive, followed by Fayetteville, then Peachtree City, Brooks, and, finally, Fayette County. There was less than a \$500 difference between all of them.

What were taxpayers getting in Peachtree City that residents in other areas did not? First, was premier Fire and EMS services. Peachtree City offered great parks and recreation areas, Strickland went on, lots of yearly events, The Fred, and a year-round aquatics center. Peachtree City had a premier public library, with the second highest circulation of any library in Georgia's PINES system. Tyrone and Fayetteville had some multi-use paths, but nothing near Peachtree City's 100-plus miles. Peachtree City had been rated the safest place to live in Georgia. The City maintained a lot of neighborhood signs and median landscaping. Beyond

that, Strickland stated that Peachtree City had some of the best Staff anywhere; they maintained their equipment. Looking at what the millage rates were and what residents got, Strickland commented that the tax money was well-used to keep Peachtree City one of the best places to live in Georgia.

Curnow took over the presentation, saying environmental sustainability was something they looked at when they were talking about planning and zoning, green spaces and so on. He listed some items that they would be dealing with in the near future, including dredging Lake Peachtree because of the silt build up. Right now that was an unknown cost. Clearing the green belt areas from downed and damaged trees was an issue.

They needed to look at environmentally-friendly building standards, Curnow continued. Solid waste collection was on the list. Did they wish to continue the current system, which allowed for multiple providers? Emergency management needed scrutiny. Tornadoes often occurred in the area, and Curnow noted that many residents had expressed concerns to him about the safety of the railroads that passed through the city. They should be looking to partnerships with Georgia Power to provide electric vehicle chargers.

In discussing operational sustainability, Curnow said one of his favorite questions was "Can we afford to own what we currently own?" They had 74 city buildings to maintain with 500,000 square feet of space. There were 29 tunnels, 36 path bridges, and 12 roadway bridges. Roofs at City Hall and the Kedron Fieldhouse needed to be replaced at a cost of \$900,000 each. The price of the Police Department expansion and the new generator, as previously mentioned, had jumped from \$1.9 million to \$3.7 million.

They had just gotten an estimate of \$500,000 to improve drainage at Drake Field. The pool bubble had reached its life expectancy, along with all the equipment that supported it. About two years ago, they got a quote of \$1.5 million, and Curnow estimated they should factor in another 65% on top of that due to inflation. Light replacement at Meade Field would be about \$1.9 million. The old system had reached the end of its usable life; parts for it were no longer being made.

A tornado knocked a tree onto the boardwalk and damaged it. They had fixed that, but further investigation showed there were 25 or 30 trees that were leaning, and they had to close the boardwalk. That was a wetlands area, so they would have to mitigate the damage, not just cut the trees down, and the cost would be about \$200,000. They had also found additional damage to the boardwalk.

City Hall was two floors and had no elevator. Adding an elevator would cost \$250,000. Pressure cleaning and sealing City Hall was going to cost around \$100,000. Replacing the Field of Hope would cost \$350,000, and an HVAC system for the library had a price tag of \$325,000. The list went on and on, Curnow said, and some items were reaching critical mass and had to be acted on.

The aesthetics of the city were important and involved ongoing maintenance issues that they had been behind on for many years. Addressing traffic issues included plans for roundabouts, high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) signals, and flashing stop signs. There were staffing issues due to reduction in numbers during COVID with the loss of 24 positions and the regaining of only 11. Many of the shortages were in areas that the public interacted with and needed something turned around quickly. Now, they had to pull people from other departments to fill in.

They were looking at the ability to manage and direct current projects. There were ongoing projects, plus 40 new projects that came on with the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). Curnow said he and Council would need to work on a priority list of projects to

ensure they continued to maintain critical areas.

Curnow reviewed steps they had taken already towards the vision of uncompromised excellence. In April, Council approved a significant employee compensation and benefits package, with about 70% of that going to Public Safety. That put Peachtree City in the 85th percentile and made them more marketable in attracting and retaining employees. They had cleaned up some repetitive services, such as moving Grounds from Recreation to Public Works. Curnow said he was especially proud of the increased public communications output, which was the result of three people's work.

Identifying capital needs for the City was another step they had taken towards fulfilling their vision. This included replacement of the Riley Field and Track at a cost of \$435,000. The new All Children's Playground was \$625,000, and about \$60,000 went into resurfacing at the Pebble Pocket Tennis Courts, and this would be needed every five or six years. The parking lot at Glenloch was paved for \$91,000. About \$3.2 million a year was used each year to pave 8.3 miles of paths on average from 2017-2022. It cost \$382,000 per mile and was done by City employees. The new fire engine, Engine 82, was part of what Curnow said Strickland meant when he talked about the great amenities.

Council had recently approved a new coating on the hockey rink roof at \$83,000. A \$25,000 upgrade of the disc golf course had been overwhelmingly popular. Signs at City facilities with a new design were being added. The lawn seating at The Fred had been updated. He went back to public communications, noting they had won three Telly awards this year for public information spots.

Curnow then went over what they needed to do to maintain Peachtree City's integrity. All of the city's buildings needed to be in a capital assets management program that would tell him what he needed to do to keep them up to date. The same applied for the fleet maintenance program. He said he wanted to increase citizen engagement through new committees and advisory groups to help Council make critical decisions in areas such as paths and recreation events. Curnow noted he had already talked about a project portfolio, and now they were out on the street with a request for proposal for a recreation master plan to guide long-term decisions.

He displayed a photo of the front of City Hall, showing how badly it needed pressure washing. Other photos showed water damage from roof leaks in the Tennis Center, disrepair of the building at Riley Field, visible insulation on the roof and walls at a fire station, along with fire fighters' gear stored in the engine bay, where diesel fumes would contaminate it after it was cleaned. Landscaping problems at parks were shown, along with damaged fences at ball parks and bleacher seats that needed replacement, plus the flooded driveway leading into Meade Field. Temporary structures used for storage at overcrowded fire stations were in other photos, as was damaged playground equipment.

Curnow also had photos of damage at the boardwalk. He showed several photos of poor landscaping in the medians, parks, and at path tunnels. Seams were pulling apart on the turf at Field of Hope. Again, he mentioned the pool bubble was at the end of its life expectancy. Also, it required about a week for Public Works and Recreation to assemble it, then take it down and store it.

The budget calendar showed a Council workshop to review the City Manager's proposed budget on June 20. There would be a public hearing on the budget and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) on July 13, with Council adoption of the budget and CIP at their August 3 meeting.

Destadio said the maintenance plan had been a big concern of his. He commended Curnow for identifying the problem areas, but observed that there would not be enough money to do

everything. Plus, they had the SPLOST projects, which would give them more things to maintain.

That was an excellent presentation, Holland told Curnow, adding that some of the photos made him wince. He said it would be a Herculean task and stated they needed a leader like Curnow. Curnow replied that he had an amazing staff.

Prebor asked the audience, and told them to tell their friends, to visit any park and take a good look. He said they would be disappointed in how it looked. Over the years, they had let things creep up on them. Maintenance never ended. They wanted to be a first-class city, and he was glad they would be creating a plan and getting started.

King remarked that he often heard and read comments from people complaining that the City had a 50% reserve, and Council needed to cut taxes. But, he pointed out, Curnow had just showed them what could happen if they started reducing that reserve. The last group of projects Curnow presented totaled \$4.2 million. The year before, it was \$3 million; \$2 million the year before. If they cut taxes and used the reserve fund for these, they would soon spend the reserves down below the recommended 30%. They had a lot of work to do and some very hard decisions to make, and it would cost some money to do that, he concluded.

Learnard remarked that the budget should reflect who they wanted to be as a city. Would they take pride when they looked at the facilities and buildings? Curnow had come in with a new set of eyes and 30 years experience, she noted, and it looked like he had been there a lot longer than six months. She felt like they could start turning things around. They still had not talked about Battery Way Park, which came up during the SPLOST conversations last year. It was important to citizens to upgrade that park.

They were not talking about big capital improvements now, just what was necessary to run the city. If they put off these expenditures, they would pay a whole lot more later, the Mayor predicted. If they really wanted uncompromised excellence, they would have to keep that in mind when they approved a budget in the next few weeks.

Adjourn

The Mayor adjourned the workshop at 4:58 p.m.

Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary

Kim Learnard, Mayor