

City Council of Peachtree City
Retreat Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2022
9 a.m.

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met for a retreat on Friday, March 11, 2022, at 9 a.m., at New Hope Baptist Church South Campus. In attendance were Mayor Kim Learnard and Council Members Gretchen Caola, Frank Destadio, Mike King, and Phil Prebor, along with City Clerk Yasmin Julio and City Manager Jon Rorie.

Member Services Director Pam Helton and Member Services Consultant Michael McPherson of the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) were the facilitators. McPherson told Council he worked for them and was always ready to assist, as was Helton. He explained that the GMA was helping out the Carl Vinson Institute in facilitating at these retreats because one of the Institute's employees, the greatly respected Gordon Maner, had passed away, leaving a year's worth of facilitating jobs. It was not an ideal situation, McPherson went on, because facilitators should be a third party, and the GMA worked for its municipalities.

The role of a facilitator was to keep the discussion moving and make sure everyone was heard. They would keep a written record. Council would have to reach a consensus on some topics. Perception of what they did was important to the community, and Peachtree City seemed to be a tight-knit community. Each member of Council said they were doing this because they wanted to give back to the community. Today's goal was to figure out goals and priorities.

He noted that the father of Joel Cowan, one of the founders of Peachtree City, was president of the GMA at one time, so Cowan grew up with an understanding of how a city worked. McPherson said Peachtree City was created at a time when counties held most of the power in government.

He told them they would check their titles at the door—everyone was equal. This gathering would focus on the future and broad strategies for the community. Council should look at things from 30,000 feet, and the City Manager and department heads could handle the details. He wanted them to feel confident in speaking out and let go of personal agendas. Council agreed on those ground rules.

The City Council was a team and what they did in the public spotlight had to look like that. They wanted the citizens to be proud of who they picked. He asked them about their favorite part of being an official and to share an interesting fact about themselves. Most of them said, in some fashion, they liked feeling that they had an impact on the betterment of the community and connecting citizens to government. McPherson noted they all wanted to work together, and communication was vital. That required they get to know each other. They did not have to agree, but they had to be civil. They seemed to be close on their opinions, but they needed to understand where everyone was coming from when they disagreed.

McPherson said they were going to go over some things he and Helton found interesting about Peachtree City's charter that were not typical of other municipalities. It said the Mayor would preside over meetings and maintain decorum, but it did not specify that Robert's Rules of Order would be used. If they used another method, it should be stated. Destadio said Julio had stressed using Robert's Rules of Order, so he assumed that is what they used. McPherson said some councils did spell it out, others did not. Peachtree City's charter said the Mayor would be an ex-officio member of all committees, and that was not typical. The Mayor should make sure all funds were properly accounted for and revenues properly collected, the charter read, and McPherson said that was unique.

What made Peachtree City's charter most unique compared to other forms of "weak mayor" cities was that, typically, the Mayor did not vote except to break a tie, McPherson remarked. Those charters usually allowed the Mayor to have veto power, as well. But Peachtree City allowed the Mayor to vote on all questions and had no veto power. In a way, that made them all equal, but it also made the Mayor more powerful because she got to vote on every single question.

Destadio asked about the committees, and McPherson said it referred to committees of the Council. Destadio said Council members were asked to nominate one person to the committee that was putting together the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) project list. The Mayor appointed two people. One member of Council objected. Destadio asked if the passage in the charter meant the Mayor could appoint all the members, if she desired?

King stated he interpreted that to mean the Mayor could appoint the entire committee. But did that part of the charter mean she could? Destadio continued. McPherson said that was part of the politics; they would need to come to an agreement on what that meant. It was up to the Mayor, but they should have come to an agreement beforehand on how it should be handled. If she knew someone would get their feelings hurt, even after that conversation, well, that was the way it would have to be. It did not mean that was how it happened in the past, but that was what the charter said.

Julio said there was a section that mentioned Robert's Rules specifically.

McPherson read what the charter said about the duties of the City Manager and said they were all aware and in agreement of what that meant.

McPherson commended Peachtree City's charter for being so specific. He said he recently was at a retreat for a turnover council and one of their questions was how to elect a Mayor Pro Tem? Their charter did not address it. They had been just electing someone who served until he wasn't in office, but new members wanted someone else and had held up several meetings on this issue, which McPherson said really was not that important most of the time. In Peachtree City, if there was something in the charter they did not like, they could change it with a scalpel.

Helton asked about work sessions? Learnard said they blocked off the first Tuesday of every month for a workshop, if needed. She mentioned that she and Rorie discussed holding a work session during the day before one of the twice-monthly Council meetings.

Prebor asked what would be discussed at a workshop? Helton said they usually went over what was on the agenda for the upcoming meeting so that when those items came up, it went like clockwork. They had discussed the item and were able to request information they felt they needed before a vote.

It was a public meeting where they could vote? Destadio asked. McPherson said they could vote, but mainly it was just to gather information and prepare for a vote. Prebor said it would give them an opportunity to think about what they had learned prior to the vote.

Destadio said their two-by-two meeting with Rorie were useful, but it would be better to get together with the whole Council and hear everyone's questions. Rorie said that was correct. With budget season coming up, it would be better to hold a workshop right before the meeting. The same with pre-reads of ordinances.

Learnard said most of them were retired, but Prebor ran a business, and she was concerned he might not be able to meet in the daytime. Prebor said he could make it work. They were talking about once a month. Rorie asked to talk about this later in the day. Learnard said it would be easier on staff if they had this daytime workshop replacing one of the two night meetings.

They would be able to have free discussion without worrying about Rules of Order or having public comment. Rorie said everyone should have the opportunity to come together as a group and express their opinions.

The downside, King said, was the perception that they were holding meetings that working people could not attend. People would criticize them. McPherson said they should open it up to public comment after explaining the benefits.

They could sell it, Prebor remarked, by stating that no action would be taken only discussion. It would be followed by a meeting, where there would be some discussion.

There would be no action, but it would point them in a direction, Rorie commented. Staff would be present, and they could tell them what additional information they needed. The other day, he was asked to put six variance requests on the same agenda, and he said he refused. There would not be six public hearings at one meeting.

So, they would just be gathering information, not making a decision, Destadio stated. They would have time to consider the information, talk with each other, and vote at the next Council meeting. Prebor said he liked that idea. Destadio said he did, too.

Learnard said the work session during the day would be followed by a City Council meeting. The work session could be at 1 p.m., for instance, and the meeting at 3 p.m. Prebor and Destadio said that was not what they were thinking.

That was an example, McPherson commented. They could decide on what time worked best. Helton said where she previously worked, they met the day of the Council meeting, coming in about an hour early to hash out any issues. Some cities liked to meet in work session a week before in case they required more information.

Learnard said they all agreed they should have a work session before a Council meeting. The other conversation was if they wanted to switch one of their other Council meetings to a daytime meeting. Quite often, she went on, cities that had a daytime meeting at 3 p.m. had a work session at 1 p.m.

If they followed that schedule, Prebor pointed out, staff would not have time to get them the information by 3. Destadio said he did not think that would give them time to comprehend everything. King said he believed if they held a work session, they might need only one Council meeting a month. Prebor said they could schedule two meetings a month but could cancel one if nothing was on the agenda. That is what the Planning Commission did, Prebor pointed out.

Learnard asked Rorie's opinion. He said they should move forward with a very public conversation about switching to a work session format at 1 p.m. followed by a Council meeting at 3 p.m. The second meeting for that month would still be at night. They could then decide about replacing one meeting with the work session. It might be a stretch to drop a meeting with the number of items on the agenda, but Rorie said they could try moving to the afternoon workshop and meeting and see how it worked.

If they were satisfied with the issues they discussed in the work session, they could vote on them in the Council meeting, McPherson remarked. If not, they could table them to the following meeting. Staff would get them the information they lacked, and they would be ready to vote "yes or no" at the next Council meeting.

Julio pointed out that most cities had two readings of ordinances, and it was very common for the first to occur during a workshop with the vote to take place at the meeting. This was what they had been doing for the past couple of years, Rorie remarked, having a pre-read during Council/Staff Topics, then bringing it to a vote at the following meeting two weeks later. This prevented them from re-writing it from the dais.

Prebor asked if they could make it later than 1 p.m.? Destadio wanted to make sure he understood: they would have a work session early in the afternoon where they discussed topics, then came back later in the day for a Council meeting. In the time between, they were supposed to have gotten answers to their questions. If they did not, they could table the issue.

Or, Rorie added, the things they discussed at the work session would not show up on the agenda until the Council meeting two weeks later. Staff would have to work out the scheduling for zonings and such.

Learnard proposed they hold a 3 p.m. workshop on the first Thursday of the month, followed by a 5 p.m. Council meeting. That meeting should be over by 6 p.m., Rorie stated, leaving them time to go get dinner. The topics at that 5 p.m. meeting would be what they talked about at the previous workshop.

Destadio said he liked to drive around and look at the sites discussed in the agenda topics, they go over the information packet. This scheduling would give him more time to do that.

Was this a bad time to make this transition, the Mayor asked, with Rorie leaving the City? Rorie said the first budget workshop was scheduled for April 5, and he knew he would not be there. Why not do the first workshop on April 7 before the Council meeting? Rorie said he could be there April 7, so why not have the Mayor call a special budget workshop from 3 to 5 p.m.? But it might be hard to change the time of the Council meeting so close to that date.

Learnard asked if they wanted to wait until there was a new City Manager? Rorie said the interim should be in place in April. Learnard said they could hold the workshop from 4 to 5 p.m. on April 7, then hold the regular Council meeting at 6:30 p.m. They would consider a permanent change later. Rorie said all they had done today was give staff direction. Learnard said she thought this schedule would be exhausting, but King suggested they could do it once and decide later on a permanent arrangement.

McPherson commended them on this discussion, saying this kind of give and take was what he was there for. He then called a 10-minute break.

Learnard asked if they needed to have two conversations regarding filling the City Manager position? They needed to vote to hire the Mercer Group to conduct a search to fill the position, and they needed to vote on an appointment as an interim. King said they should discuss hiring the Mercer Group separately. Prebor said he wanted language in the contract changed to say "give written email notice."

Destadio had a change under "Position Analysis" where it said the Mercer Group would conduct

interviews with the Mayor, Council, and other Stakeholders to determine the goals. He did not think other stakeholders needed to be involved. He said he believed Rorie thought that meant senior staff members, and he was comfortable with that, but he did not want to see it expanded to include developers or influential citizens.

Learnard said it would be good if Mercer Group interviewed Council to see what they wanted in the next City Manager, and she suggested they could talk to City Attorney Ted Meeker, engineer Dan Davis, and Julio. Helton said could substitute language that said "others deemed appropriate by Council." Meeker and Davis were not senior staff, the Mayor said, but they were stakeholders who would have good insight. Destadio said that was okay, as long as Council retained control.

Helton said she had seen situations where Councils had invited other individuals to sit in on interviews or hold a meet and greet to see how they interacted with others.

If the two suggested changes were made, Rorie asked, would Council sign off on this and let him get the ball rolling? They agreed. Destadio said he had some questions, but nothing that would involve a change. In response to one of Destadio's questions, Rorie said the Mercer Group would interview Council members about what they were seeking, create a position profile, and advertise that position profile. They would go through the applications and present Council with a group that met that profile. Destadio said his questions were not about the contract, but about the process.

Caola asked if they would receive the whole bios of all of the applicants in that final group? Destadio said he was sure they could ask for it. Learnard said she wanted to be notified when the job was posted.

Julio said they needed a vote.

King moved they move ahead on the proposed agreement, with changes, with the Mercer Group as specified today. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

They had a list of candidates for the interim position, King remarked, and McPherson said a lot of them were retired and were not interested in a permanent position. The list was about five or six people, and Rorie said they could invite the ones they were interested in to come to Peachtree City and interview. Destadio said they might have to pay travel costs. He added that he wanted to stipulate, and the others agreed, that the people they interviewed not be on the candidate list for the permanent job. McPherson said they were not seeking permanent jobs. There would only be two or three who were in the area and would be interested.

King said they should take the list from GMA and add anyone else they knew of. Learnard said Destadio should talk to former City Manager Bernie McMullen. Helton would send the short list to Julio, who would ask if there were any names to add. Council would discuss who they wanted to interview. They needed to get the names to Julio by the end of the next week, Learnard said, so they could complete the process in a week.

McPherson said he asked them to list their top five priorities, and he was glad to see there was some overlap. Several of them had mentioned a short-term rental ordinance, so they would start there. What did they see in Peachtree City that brought this to mind. They all mentioned a "party house" that neighbors were complaining about, and Learnard brought up what was happening in Atlanta, which was hedge funds buying up properties for the purpose of renting them. It was probably already happening in Peachtree City, McPherson said, they just wanted now to overcome the zoning. That was a legislative issue right now.

McPherson said a nearby city reached out to them just yesterday, and there was a model that involved both those issues. They took single-family homes and compartmentalized them. The one they heard about yesterday had been compartmentalized into 11 dwelling units. This model charged weekly rent, and, with the rental market being what it was, that was big money. That opportunity for profit had super-charged the short-term rental option.

The party houses were not the real threat, McPherson commented, saying that short-term leases allowed people in that you did not want next to your family. The legislature needed to put laws in place to deal with regulating short-term rentals.

Learnard asked about House Bill 1093, which McPherson said allowed companies to develop lease-only developments, long- or short-term, with no regulation from the municipalities. That bill would override the zoning, Destadio commented, and McPherson said that is what it looked like on paper, but, in reality, they could probably fight it on the basis of constitutionality. They should fight it now while it was in the legislature.

Learnard said they had been considering putting a resolution of opposition on the Council agenda, and McPherson said they should, whether the Senate bill crossed over to the House or not. The legislators needed to hear as much opposition as possible.

Prebor moved to pass a resolution in opposition of HB 1093, SB 494 and in opposition of other limitations on a city's authority to make housing, land use and zoning decisions within a local government's geographical boundaries. King seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

They would still put this on the March 17 Council agenda to make this opposition public. They would send this to the local legislative delegation.

Back to the party house, McPherson said he had seen photos taken in Savannah of the mayhem caused in the neighborhood by one of these rentals. They all agreed on this, Learnard said, they just needed an ordinance. She did not know about the nuances, just as for mother-in-law suites. Rorie would have to make sure the ordinance would cover all the bases. Caola said they needed to decide what a short-term rental was, and Rorie suggested anything less than six months. They were working on it, but it was complex, and had to be vetted through the attorney. Meeker would say they could not outlaw them, but they could set a time limit. Destadio pointed out that the ordinance should specify no subletting. Learnard said time was of the essence in getting this passed.

Sandy Springs, McPherson remarked, allowed short-term rentals only in secondary units, such as garage apartments. Some cities only allowed it if the owner was living on the property. A bed and breakfast was different, McPherson said, and had to go through all the inspections a hotel did.

Rorie read an email from the City Attorney to Council that said property use should be regulated, not prohibited. McPherson said a homeowners association with a covenant could ban short-term rentals. Neighborhoods without covenants needed regulation from the city. McPherson mentioned that this had not played itself out in the Capitol. There were bills every year. Savannah had built its own ordinance to protect property owners. If they had not, the entire city could be short-term rentals. It might be effective, if they only had the one party house, to go at them with what they had—trash, parking, and go after it every time. Prebor said he would like to over-regulate it by saying no street parking, only one trash can, no subletting.

King said the neighborhoods could re-establish their HOAs. If they did it in their neighborhood, others might do it to. He said in three of five neighborhoods, the HOAs were no longer in effect, and Caola noted you needed 100% approval to form one. Just the prospect of having one of these houses on your street should lend momentum to the forming of an HOA.

That was true that you had to have all the homes agree to an HOA, King said, but they could create a covenant to cover just this one issue. Every neighborhood had one of these short-term rentals, the Mayor said, and Helton said there were 166 Air BnBs in Peachtree City. They needed to get started, Learnard concluded.

Were they getting hotel/motel taxes from these rentals? Prebor said he did not think they should because that could be construed as their being allowed. Rorie said they did not actively pursue them. McPherson pointed out that in Savannah, where the rentals were allowed in certain areas, they paid an annual fee and paid taxes to the office that regulated them. Either Fayetteville or Fayette County, Learnard remarked, required they be registered, provide a roster of guests, and other things, but Learnard said she did not like any of that.

It would be difficult to take that money away from property owners, McPherson said, pointing out that a lot of these houses were being rented by people in the film industry who were only there to sleep and were not causing any problems.

Another priority was to return public hearings and a vote to the Planning Commission. Destadio told McPherson that he served on the Planning Commission for 11 years and for most of that time, they held a public hearing and voted on a recommendation to the City Council regarding rezonings and variances. A couple of years ago, Council voted to stop the public hearing and vote on their recommendation. They said it was against the law to have a second public hearing. While campaigning, Destadio said a number of people requested this be reinstated. He had since found out from the City Attorney that it was not illegal to have a second public hearing, but only one was required.

Destadio clarified to McPherson that they were told the public hearing was a quasi-judicial proceeding, and things could come up that affected litigation. He said he had talked to other cities, and they still held both public hearings. McPherson asked how the other members of Council felt. The Planning Commission had been told their comments would be passed on to Council, but Destadio said he was not receiving them unless he read the minutes of the Planning Commission meetings.

King said Council voted unanimously for this change because the charter called for one public hearing, and that was a quasi-judicial process that needed to take place with a lawyer present. They still wanted public input and a recommendation from the Planning Commission. He told Destadio he had not seen anything from the Planning Commission in the two months he had been on Council because they had not had anything to bring them.

Prebor said he liked the current workshop format at the Planning Commission better than the old way. He recalled the East Village concept that the Planning Commission voted down 5-0, and the City Council approved 5-0. A workshop was less formal and rigid and allowed for pros and cons, but did not require a definite yes or no.

Caola said she did not know the history of this change, but she had heard from both sides. She personally did not see that a vote would be a bad thing if Council was told the reasons why, but she could see how it would look bad to the public if Council and the Planning Commission had totally

opposite votes. She wanted to know the reasons.

Learnard said she was on Council for eight years, and she liked knowing something passed 3-2 or 5-0. Council could take that under advisement. It was hard to understand nuances, but a vote was a number. Yes, the optics could be awkward if Council overrode the Planning Commission's vote.

McPherson said there was no consensus, but they needed more information about why the Planning Commission felt the way it did on items they had reviewed. He felt they should work out what they needed from the Planning Commission.

Destadio asked if he should just throw this out on the table at a Council meeting? No, McPherson said, they should talk about the information that they agreed they wanted to see.

King said they should talk to members of the Planning Commission and see how they felt. Learnard said she and King would talk to them. The goal was for City Council to get information so they could form a decision from the Planning Commission, citizens, and the developer. Learnard said she and King could meet with the Planning Commission two at a time. Caola said Learnard and King had differing opinions, so it might be good to send them to talk.

The next priority was dredging of Lake Peachtree. Destadio said he was a contractor for the County when the lake was dredged previously. In the future, Learnard said they had an agreement with the County that Peachtree City would dredge the lake for \$1 million. They needed to see how they could mitigate from the stream tributaries so they would not be drowning in silt, she continued, as well as how they would handle dredging in the future for \$1 million from the County. They all agreed that was a priority.

When the lake was drained, King said Rorie showed him a device that cost about a quarter of a million dollars that you could put in the tributary area to dredge on a local level. He said he would have asked the County for the \$1 million right then, bought that device, and the County could rent it to dredge Lake Horton, too.

Destadio said they used equipment and a formula to determine what the bottom of the lake was, but the County Administrator said it would cost too much to dredge to that point, so he raised the bottom by two feet, then he raised it two more feet. He would only let them dredge in certain spots. A million dollars was a drop in the bucket, he continued. A dredging to the bottom would cost far more than that. It would just get worse and worse until the lake became a hazard. Learnard said they all agreed with that.

Prebor said they needed to figure out the next best step. Learnard asked Rorie if they had a proposal from Dan Davis? He said they did not.

Learnard asked if they could all agree that this needed to be addressed; they should budget for it in their next budget year; they should move now to get a proposal from Davis on how to proceed. Rorie said he knew they needed to remove 35,000 cubic yards right now.

Another of Destadio's issues was removing overhanging dead branches along Robinson Road and Walt Banks Road. He just wanted them trimmed. There were fallen trees all over the place. They needed to put even a small amount in the budget for picking up dead trees. Rorie said they had 3,700 acres of green space, and the decision was made in the past that if it fell there, it stayed there. Learnard pointed out that was better for the environment. Rorie said he had a citizen talk to him about

removing these trees from North Peachtree Parkway; it would cost \$50,000 per mile, but he could direct it to be done if that is what Council wished.

If there were one or two places where they needed to haul away some logs, okay, Learnard stated, but as a policy, she would say drop them and leave them. A compromise, like trimming the overhanging trees and leaving the others might be better. McPherson suggested assessing the danger.

King said he agreed with the Mayor, but if the overhang was a problem, they should address it. Prebor agreed they needed to trim those so big trucks did not hit them.

Destadio said he was not asking that every tree that fell be removed. He was talking about the areas where you entered and left the city. They all said they would pay more attention when they drive through this area.

Caola agreed this should be addressed, but not everywhere.

Rorie said they could increase the tree budget from \$300,000 to \$450,000 to improve this gateway to the city.

Parking on Battery Way was one of Caola's priorities, and she presented photos showing the proximity of cars to the playground and picnic tables. She wanted them to figure out a way to get rid of a lot of that parking, while leaving a couple of handicap spots and maybe two regular parking spaces.

Destadio said a police officer told him he had rather not have the parking there because of teenagers, mostly from other areas, using it as a party place. Caola said they had told her the same thing. Learnard remarked that if they removed the parking, people would just park on the road, but Prebor told her they had made the road no parking.

There was plenty of parking at Drake Field, Caola pointed out, adding that police said only The Home Depot and Walmart had more calls than the Battery Way Park. It was a waste of resources.

Prebor said he understood the problem but was concerned that people would not have a place to park when bringing their paddle boats or canoes. He lived too far from the park to take a golf cart. Caola told him there was a boat ramp on the other side of the lake. Prebor mentioned that many people went there to watch the sunset, and there needed to be more than two spaces. Caola said she might be okay with parking there if there was a way to identify non-residents.

When was this happening? McPherson asked. Caola said it was across the board. Eliminating 16 parking spaces was not a good solution, King remarked, because you would find that you had denied access to the park to Peachtree City residents who did not have golf carts. He did not support using the area as a boat launch. Police went through there regularly and could run tag checks.

Peachtree City had a lot of amenities, Learnard stated, so people wanted to visit. She was proud of that, but at some point, did you need to restrict it? There were already signs saying Lake Peachtree was for residents and their invited guests. They needed to keep an eye on crime but removing vehicle parking would not serve the citizens.

The group then paused for a working lunch.

McPherson pointed out that Prebor had listed traffic issues as his priorities. He asked if they could talk

about this without Georgia Department of Transportation being in on the conversation, and Prebor said they probably needed GDOT.

Destadio asked about the displaced left turn at SR 54 and 74, and Learnard said The Avenue was suing because it would eliminate access off SR 74 for everyone except people who came eastbound off SR 54 and turned right at the intersection. They did not really need it because they had passed an entrance on SR 54.

Prebor said they just could not talk about The Avenue. In the mornings, he noted vehicles on SR 54 were backed up into Coweta County. They should make it where they could not turn left into Best Buy or, coming from the other way, onto Huddleston and Planterra. Since they improved the Planterra intersection, Prebor went on, few cars came from Best Buy onto Huddleston. What if they made two lanes turning left off of Huddleston? He said he traveled that area daily, and few cars came straight. He said they should watch Rorie's drone footage.

No one objected to this, but how should they move it forward? Learnard inquired, and Rorie said they would have to involve GDOT because SR 54/74 were their roads. They had shared the drone footage. McPherson said they needed to talk to their GDOT board member. Prebor said they needed updated drone footage and take it to their board member.

The first thing he learned as a lobbyist was how to listen. He advised them to get to know their board member, then they could talk about what they wanted. The member, newly appointed, was Dennis McIntyre, from Coweta County, Learnard said she and Prebor could set up a meeting with him.

Was a red light at Peachtree Parkway different? McPherson asked. They could take care of that internally, but Rorie said they needed to assume there would be a roundabout at that intersection eventually. They could do small steps to move towards that, such as right turn only, using Local Option Sales Tax money.

McPherson mentioned they should be congratulating themselves for having the first LOST agreement signed in the State. Rorie should get the credit, Learnard said, for getting them all on the same page.

Prebor also said they should come up with some strategies for combating crime. They were getting immune to something like an armed robbery on a Sunday afternoon at Kedron Village, and he did not like it. Council needed to keep their eye on the ball.

Destadio said he believed it was coming from other parts of the county. Prebor said he did not know where it was coming from, but people were getting frightened. Destadio said his wife would not go shopping in Fayetteville anymore. Prebor said they did not want to let it get out of hand.

McPherson asked if they were losing police officers to other areas due to pay? Learnard said they had just covered all of that. What did they need to do, then?

Prebor said he wished he knew the solution. King said they could not control what was around them, but they had a well-paid, well-trained police force that was doing a good job, in his opinion, in catching these criminals. They were caught and convicted within a few days and, King remarked, sooner or later they would get the message that Peachtree City was not the place to commit a crime.

Did they need more officers? Destadio asked. Rorie said they did not. Their goal was for officers to spend at least 20% of their time rattling doors and being visible and they were doing that. Rorie added that trendlines did not show an increase in crime. They were just hearing about it more through social

media. Caola said the crimes were reported, but she wanted it publicized when they were caught. She also asked why alarms did not call 911 immediately when there was a break-in. Instead, they called the monitoring company. McPherson said that the 911 law said the alarm company had to verify it was not a false alarm, as most of them were. King added that there was a greater danger if the police arrived in time to confront the burglars.

Another of Prebor's priorities was improving communication and having the city be a source of information. He said he seldom heard of anyone being arrested. Rorie explained that the police department had a public information officer, and maybe they could do a better job getting these things posted. Prebor said he wanted to see press releases. Most people got their information from social media. McPherson said Council had the power to recognize officers who made big arrests, but they also needed to sit back and let the Chief decide how to publicize activity.

Prebor said he liked seeing them highlight all the great things about the city. They needed to celebrate loudly, as McPherson said. Helton asked if they had a public information officer, and Learnard said they did. They had an offer to print press releases on The Citizen's website but had not discussed how to do it. Prebor asked the facilitators what cities they thought had the best public information programs. Helton said she could provide them with a list.

There were courses they could take to help them with public information. Helton asked if they had communications policies, and Julio said they did, adding that they had been slowly increasing the amount of information they put on social media. She said she had sent press releases to the publisher, but had not seen them on the website. They were trying print ads, text messages, but they still wanted to get more people to follow the city pages on Facebook. They had tried to make the website more friendly. They were re-building the communications right now.

Learnard brought up establishing a re-development committee, which she said was on the list of previous Council priorities. The list stated "re-established CID (community improvement district) legislation; some members participated in training and an assessment report was completed about creating a CID on Huddleston Road, but at a standstill until sewer was completed." Prebor said he owned property along Huddleston Road, so he would not participate in the conversation.

Caola asked what a CID was, and McPherson said it gave the businesspeople in that overlay the ability to tax themselves to do things in that corridor. It removed the burden from City Council and put it on the people who were complaining or who would benefit. It was a way an underdeveloped area could decide to improve themselves, Learnard remarked. It did not impact school taxes.

If they ran sewer along Huddleston, King stated, the property owners could pay for the hookup over time if they formed a CID. Destadio said Hip Pocket would be another area where people might not be able to pay for hookup and would benefit from the CID. People around Braelinn Village had talked about a CID.

What did re-establishing CID legislation mean? Learnard asked. Rorie said if you took Paschall Road to SR 54 along Huddleston and called that corridor a CID corridor, they would need to get 75% of the value of the property and 50% plus one of the property owners had to agree to tax themselves to bring their millage rate up to a maximum of 12 mills. The extra tax revenue would go to the CID projects. That had to be approved by Council. The assessment completion meant that the Planning and Zoning Department had compiled a property list and the values. John Proffitt owned most of the property. Rorie added they could not do a CID in a residential neighborhood.

Learnard asked who usually provided the impetus? Rorie said it could be a developer or it could be a

group of property owners in the area. He suggested they ask Planning and Development Director Robin Cailloux to present all her information at a workshop meeting. Learnard said they would want to wait until they had a permanent city manager. Maybe they could take it up next year. The sewer was coming, along with a golf cart path, and she hoped they could develop a vision for what that area could become.

They could send someone to a Council meeting to give a presentation on CIDs, McPherson offered. Learnard said they should save it for 2023. McPherson pointed out that Gwinnett had a lot of CIDs. Rorie asked about Cobb Parkway, and McPherson said they had a huge project going on there.

They were relocating a playground next to City Hall, Learnard observed, and she did not know what was going in place of the old playground. A bridge had been proposed to link the two areas, but the cost was prohibitive. It was a SPLOST project budgeted for \$250,000, but the cost ran up to \$500,000.

Did they plan on doing anything in the green space? and Rorie said there was no plan at this time. Maybe another pavilion, Destadio suggested. Learnard liked that idea. Prebor mentioned ADA access for kayaks.

Learnard said they needed to own their message. At a town hall meeting on communications, she was surprised to hear that people wanted tweaks to the city newsletter. She had not realized how much it was used. Prebor mentioned that he did not like having to click to another site. Julio said they were using a different system now, but people were receiving different methods. They were working on getting it all over to one method.

There was a new gateway bridge, and Learnard said she wanted landscaping there. They should spend a little money and get a professional design. Council all agreed that they should do this and create an entrance to the city that they could be proud of. Caola said it should be low maintenance and something deer would not eat.

Caola said she was satisfied with what they had discussed on her priorities. She mentioned path safety and said she hoped Rorie would talk about that with the interim. Destadio said he would like a copy of the path system advisory group's report. Caola said they were putting in speed bumps and instituting some other methods of promoting safety to path users.

They needed to consider whether to replace the pool bubble for \$750,000 or resurface tennis courts for \$1 million, King remarked. They might need to put a roof over the tennis center. He proposed they make the entire Tennis Center a recreational complex. It would make a lot of Tennis Center members mad, but there were 20 other courts in the city. They did not subsidize golf, so why did they do it for tennis? They could refurbish that building for an Olympic size pool, tennis, pickleball, whatever. They might need to extend the building, but it could become a citywide park.

Learnard pointed out that they owned the land between the Tennis Center and SR 54. Learnard mentioned that Huddleston Road went to a dead end, and there was property back there. The city could buy it, maybe with SPLOST money? King said Planterra HOA owned six acres at the Tennis Center. Learnard wanted them to have something done that they would be proud of 20 years from now. Prebor said they did not know if that property owner was interested in selling. Learnard said they could make some inquiries. It would be an investment in the future.

Destadio said people in Planterra would object to a city recreation area due to increased traffic. That was all the more reason to consider buying the vacant land, Learnard said, adding that someone in the future would propose something awful there, and they would be sorry they did not buy it. Destadio

said he was in favor of buying the land whether they had a need for it or not.

Rorie brought the conversation back to the pool, saying a roof over the Kedron pool would cost \$2.5 to \$3 million. It would last forever, but it seemed illogical to take that money to build over a 30-year-old pool that did not have the footprint to support it. It made more sense to put in something better at the Tennis Center and putting it on the SPLOST.

King said he liked the idea of buying on Huddleston. Prebor said someone should see if the property owner was interested. The owner would ask where he could move his operation. Destadio said the owner might wait until the sewer went in, which would greatly increase the property value. They needed to do it sooner than later.

Learnard asked Rorie to make a recommendation on how to finance this. What would be the best way to approach the property owner? Prebor asked. McPherson said they had resources on how to handle this.

Learnard said she wanted to know more about the property.

Moving on, King said they would wait to talk about sewer on Hip Pocket as well as waste disposal. Destadio proposed they interview citizens to serve on the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) Board and not have City Council serve. They could report to the City Council, but it was not them trying to wear two hats and working in an area they did not know a lot about. The board would not be able to go out on its own like they did the last time, he commented.

Prebor said he liked it the way it was. The Planning Commission could go rogue, but it would not hit his wallet, unlike WASA. Council was elected and had to answer to citizens. Prebor said he was not qualified to run a sewerage treatment plant, but he knew how to hire someone who could. Destadio said they would answer to the Council, like the Planning Commission. All they would do was work with the director and handle questions that came up.

King said they took over because they had a rogue outfit, and no one knew anything about sewer. He was convinced there was corruption. Destadio said he was just asking for people to apply to be on the board, and Council would interview them and appoint them. They could not raise rates or change things; they answered to Council.

McPherson said the question seemed to be whether they should move that authority back to an enterprise fund in the city. Destadio said that was not his comment.

Learnard reminded them they had an interim, then a new city manager coming. This was a topic to keep on the back burner until next year. They could not put anything on the legislature now, Rorie pointed out. Could the board be moved back to an enterprise fund? Rorie said it could, but it had to go through the legislature. Prebor said they would have to look at the financial benefit of having it with the city.

The next topic was maintaining a fund balance of 50%, plus or minus 5%, as a required fund. King said it took them more than 10 years to get to a 50% reserve fund, or \$20 million. They were using that money for nice-to-have stuff, but it would not help if they had an emergency, such as the tornado last year. That amount of money also allowed you to fund projects with cash. He said he did not like debt, and this was the way they should be.

Destadio asked if he was going to propose this, and King said yes. Was he sure he wanted to make it a

requirement, Learnard said, and not just a revision to the guideline, which was now 31%. Why not make it 50%? King said he would add a fluctuation of 5% in case they wanted to buy cars or something. Learnard said that guideline was a policy they had set. Rorie said 31% was the minimum requirement to maintain their bond rating. If they left it as a guideline, they would not have to raise taxes if there was an emergency, Prebor stated.

Rorie asked Julio to request Financial Services Director Paul Salvatore revise this to 50%.

Before they finished with this portion of the program, Julio asked if they could quickly go over the priorities. Most did not have a set timeline, she remarked.

They talked about the new East Village along SR 54. A path along there would be a SPLOST project. Were they willing to put a path in front of the cemetery and down Carriage Lane to carry over the new school? It would be \$800,000. Rorie said he wanted the current SPLOST group to think about a tunnel at Walt Banks and Robinson. They were having trouble getting an easement from the property owner.

There would be a workshop on April 7, so did they need to identify topics to discuss then or at another workshop before Rorie left? Learnard asked. Maybe they should have another workshop in April and talk about the East Village path. Crosstown and Peachtree Parkway was an upcoming issue, as was the bridge at All Children's Playground. They needed to know about the airport contract coming up at the end of the year. There were a lot of little nuggets that were hiding, and someone else needed to know about them, Rorie commented.

Destadio mentioned problems with lights at the ball fields, and Rorie said they were working on it. Learnard said some groups liked the credit card scanners, but others did not. Prebor asked if LED lights were now more cost-effective? Rorie said they had come down in price, so it might be worthwhile to consider. It might take them 50 years to break even.

Learnard asked how they could use SPLOST dollars for paving? Rorie said the law allowed it to be used for road and path paving.

Were they still sealing the facade on the library and City Hall? Destadio wondered. Rorie said it was still cost-effective to seal it, but Learnard said they needed to change something, and suggested they get an architect in to price out a facelift. Rorie said he did not see why they could not just add faux stone to the columns at City Hall. It would not be expensive. Was that not what SPLOST was for? Learnard remarked.

Rorie said there was a professional services line item in the budget. The Mercer agreement would come from there. They could take some money from that item, about \$10,000 or \$15,000, and use it for an architectural review. They had the money right now. Rorie said he would approach Jefferson Browne about it.

Destadio mentioned changing the election cycle to even-numbered years, but King said that was against the law.

They discussed a recent case that Brookhaven had lost against a developer, and the need for caution in keeping their personal opinions out of decisions. They could be sued personally. McPherson said they should get the City Attorney to go over this ruling with Council and the Planning Commission.

They had decided to hold a workshop prior to the City Council meeting on April 7 at 4 p.m. There would be another workshop on April 21 before the Council meeting. They could invite Meeker and the

Planning Commission for a joint executive session, followed by the workshop. Prebor said he wanted to know if there was any type of insurance that would cover them in these kinds of cases? Helton said they were bonded.

McPherson asked them if they were all satisfied with what they had discussed? and they agreed they were. They all said they felt they were moving forward, and Learnard said the trust in her colleagues was much improved. McPherson stated they needed to get to know one another. Learnard said she fought for this and would like to repeat it. The rest of the Council agreed.

McPherson assured them their issues were real, but some cities had just imploded after COVID, losing many of their employees. He concluded by playing a video of Gen. Colin Powell talking about leadership. The retreat ended at 3:00 p.m.

Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary

Kim Learnard, Mayor