

**MINUTES OF WORKSHOP
CITY COUNCIL OF PEACHTREE CITY
February 5, 2013**

The City Council workshop was called to order in the City Hall Council Chambers at 6:30 p.m. on February 5, 2013. Those present were Mayor Don Haddix and Council members Kim Learnard, Vanessa Fleisch, Erik Imker, and George Dienhart. Planning Commission Chairman Frank Destadio and Commissioner Lynda Wojcik were also in attendance as were the City Manager, Dr. James Pennington; the Community Services Director, Mr. Jon Rorie; the Planning and Zoning Administrator, Mr. David Rast; and the Recording Secretary, Ms. Jennis Rice.

Discuss Final Report and Recommendations from ONE Peachtree City Initiative

Mr. Rast explained that Staff would be giving an overview of the results of the ONE Peachtree City process and thanked those in attendance for coming. Staff had been working on this for some time. He expressed his appreciation to those who had participated in the Open Houses and the Roundtable discussions. He applauded the efforts of Mr. Tony Bernard, who was now the City Planner for the City of Newnan, and Mr. Erick Murphy, the former Planning Intern whose last day was that Friday, February 10.

Mr. Rast provided those in attendance with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation he was presenting which would remain in the files of the Community Services offices in the lower level of City Hall. Staff had researched the plans of planned communities of similar size to Peachtree City in an effort to learn from the plans they had developed. That research was used to develop the concept for Peachtree City and was presented at a Joint City Council and Planning Commission workshop on February 7, 2012.

Mr. Rast stated there were three simple goals they felt had been accomplished:

- Updated and factual technical information had been provided to paint a realistic picture of Peachtree City today;
- As much feedback and input as possible had been solicited from the community; and
- The community had been engaged through innovative data gathering efforts.

The new Community Room in the lower level of City Hall had been used as Plan Central and was where the kick-off celebrations, open houses, and roundtable sessions were held.

Displays had been set up around the Community Room related to community aesthetics, several versions of city signage, village identification, monument signage, special event signage, way-finding signage, and industrial park signage. A section on quality of life, i.e., greenspace, the multi-use path system, and recreation facilities, was provided as well as a section on growth and development, i.e., zoning, land use, annexation, and utilization of undeveloped property.

Three comment boards were also provided where people could leave notes and comment on the notes others had left on the following topics:

- (1) One thing they liked about Peachtree City,
- (2) One thing they would like to change about Peachtree City, and
- (3) One vision for the Peachtree City of the future.

A very elementary budget exercise provided attendees the opportunity to spend the tax dollars generated in Fayette County minus the monies that went to the Fayette County Board of Education, Fayette County, and the State. The categories included community aesthetics,

quality of life, roads, development, and public safety. Some wanted a 2 percent rollback. These opinions were compared to the 2011 budget that was adopted.

Mr. Rast stated there was a lot of dialogue between the citizens, City Staff, and Planning Commission and City Council members who attended. All of the comments had been tabulated and were outlined in the handout Mr. Rast had distributed. He noted that these comments were taken directly from the comments that were written down at the roundtable sessions. Some were frank, some far-fetched, and there were also a lot of good and consistent opinions included.

A list of the people who participated was also included in Mr. Rast's document. He was impressed by the number of people who participated and had been in Peachtree City for quite some time. This told him there were a lot of people who had invested a lot of time in the community and wanted to see it prosper.

The items that were discussed included the following:

- The strengths and challenges the city faced.
- People's take on life in Peachtree City, where it was now and the course of action in the future.
- Comments were summarized into a "wordle" which provided a gist of what people were talking about. The larger the font, the more consistent that topic had been in all of the roundtable sessions.
- The themes that were prominent in each of the roundtable sessions as to what people liked about the city were:
 - The overall sense of community,
 - The family atmosphere,
 - The abundance of green-space,
 - The golf carts and path system,
 - The recreational opportunities, and
 - The Fourth of July.
- The common themes of what people did not like about the city were:
 - The lack of outdoor events and a central gathering place,
 - Maintenance of the landscaping,
 - Limited affordable housing options,
 - The number of rental homes, and
 - The amount of vacant retail space.

There was confusion as to what was meant by the lack of outdoor events. Mr. Rast said people acknowledged there were plenty of sporting events, etc., but there really were not a lot of events where the entire community could come and participate such as arts or music festivals, etc.

- The common themes of what the ideal community would be were:
 - A strong sense of community,
 - More outdoor festivals and community-wide events,
 - An essential gathering area,

- o More community involvement, and
- o Better utilization of Drake Field.

During the second roundtable session, discussion was about how the city could balance growth and maintain the things that were liked and valued, the choices the City faced regarding housing needs, and the things that made Peachtree City a desirable place to live.

When discussion turned to preserving and improving our natural environment and how we should protect our air, water, and greenspace, there was a strong desire to:

- Sustain the city and preserve the things the citizens appreciated,
- Update the vision statement and a strategic plan,
- Find a way to empower the community,
- Identify volunteer opportunities,
- Maintain and enhance city facilities, and
- Ensure factual information was provided.

The next topic of discussion was the natural environment and how to protect the air, water, and greenspace. The overriding themes were protection of the buffers, maintenance of the greenspace, and making this the signature of the city as it had been through the years. Some even recommended that maintenance standards be developed for some of the natural areas. Some felt plant material should be removed and replaced.

Improving educational opportunities for residents by partnering with the University of Georgia, Clayton State, and some of the other universities in this area was also mentioned.

The common themes about the activities that were most important included the path system, the Library, the Fourth of July parade and fireworks, running events and triathlons, the Farmers' Market, the Community Garden, etc.

Activities the residents would like to see or participate in in the future included the outdoor events at City Hall Plaza, outdoor festivals within the village retail centers, events at Drake Field, village identification, and better lake access. Mr. Rast acknowledged that there already were a lot of these activities, but there was an opportunity to look at some different areas.

A good deal of time was spent on housing, what type of housing might be needed, and what type of planning was necessary for housing in the future. Some key themes of this topic were neighborhood redevelopment, infill housing, live-work-shop concepts, increased density, and low-to-moderate income.

Some of the things people would like to see to encourage participation in the community included outdoor activities such as the Community Garden, path system maintenance, expansion of the path system, bike racks, golf cart parking, bike lanes, and youth activities. It was very apparent there was a desire to try to be more of an active community as we planned for the future.

The session on communication included the following topics:

- How the needs of the community were balanced,
- How we might equip residents to speak more freely together,
- How opposing views and opinions were welcomed,

- What we might do to try to build consensus in the community, and
- How to get people more involved.
 - In general, the group appreciated the roundtable process where people could sit across from each other and share opinions, even if they did not always agree.
 - It was felt the city should provide a running list of volunteer activities for people of all ages, including families. The list should be specific as to time commitments and tasks.
 - They also felt volunteers should be recognized, volunteer opportunities should be identified, and the recommendations of volunteers should be heard.
- A Community Clean-up Day was proposed. Mr. Rast noted those who participated in the roundtable discussions had a tremendous desire to give back to the community in whatever way they could.

Mr. Rast stated that the final session dealt with effective communication.

- Roundtable discussions.
- Providing more information in The Updates.
- A centralized website and calendar.
- Accentuating the positive.
- Create some eclectic events and be known for them.
- The people had a lot of ideas to get people involved. One suggestion that Mr. Rast thought sounded pretty good was to hold an event at City Hall Plaza that would include members of the various boards and commissions. Residents could meet them and find out about what was involved in holding these positions.

The next question was, "Where do we go from here?" as a lot of good ideas had been generated by those who participated.

Mr. Rast noted that some of the ONE Peachtree City participants were in the audience and he asked whether any of them would like to speak. Those who shared their thoughts included the following:

Mr. Felix Kelly, a 12-year resident of Peachtree City

- Peachtree City had not annexed very much even though all the jurisdictions around us were. Pretty soon, Peachtree City would have no say in what was developed around us. He hoped the City would seriously look at this possibility.

Dr. Pennington thought these were the kinds of subjects that needed to be discussed and had the following additional comments:

- Peachtree City was built around a plan.
- The problem was that if the proper buffers and controls around the community were not established, there could be some serious problems.
- It was important to find the mechanisms to keep Peachtree City alive and moving forward.
- Strategic planning was important to establish that vision and then move forward with the goals and objectives of that strategic plan. This should be a flexible, movable, changing object and was important to provide guidance for us.

- It was extremely important to look at all of the boundaries around the city.

Planning Commission Chairman Frank Destadio noted that the groups they had spoken to thought it was important to watch our borders and make sure we were annexing properly. They also wanted to ensure that the values and concepts that made Peachtree City were not lost in those annexations. They wanted to keep what we have but also protect our borders. Dr. Pennington agreed completely.

Mayor Haddix added that we did not know what was good for annexation and it was important to have a unified approach. It could not be piecemeal but must be organized and all encompassing or it could fail.

Ms. Wojcik noted the following relative to annexations:

- There would always be a city border.
- The standards in Fayette County, Fayetteville, Senoia, etc., should be reflective of Peachtree City's standards so the entire county could have a quality of life similar to Peachtree City's.
 - Mayor Haddix said it was important to realize other cities did not want to be like Peachtree City.
 - Ms. Wojcik thought they did want a lot of the same things and especially wanted to keep their property values up.
 - It was important to have friendly and cooperative discussions.
 - Mayor Haddix agreed that cooperation was important. However, he did not think conformity was ever going to happen. Everyone had their own lifestyle which was the reason people chose one community over another.

Since Dr. Pennington had been in Peachtree City, he had found that certain words were unspeakable. He did not think it should be that way. There had to be dialogue.

Mayor Haddix urged everyone to look at the County's Land Use Plan. The majority of the property was zoned for residential, and there was no zoning for greenspace. People did not want to change the zoning of their property unless they had to. He agreed that discussion was the first step. Dr. Pennington noted that there was discussion going on.

Ms. Tricia Stearns, who had lived in Peachtree City for 18 years, said it was very important for her to come to this meeting because Mr. Rast and his team had worked so hard. She thought page 21 summed it up: "Peachtree City is not like every town." This was the reason she went to the ONE Peachtree City meetings. She urged people to read Mr. Rast's report because it was full of a lot of good information. She was only aware of what happened in her group but found that all of the groups were saying the same thing.

Ms. Stearns loved that the ONE Peachtree City forums took national problems and discussed how they should be addressed locally. She thought City Council owed it to the people who participated to really digest these comments and figure out a strategy to address the foremost problems. What are we going to do from here?

Mayor Haddix agreed with Ms. Stearns wholeheartedly.

A woman who did not identify herself had participated in the Roundtables and felt very fortunate to be part of the ONE Peachtree City process. Their group included people of all ages with a lot of different opinions. She thought this was an honest review of the process. Even though no one at her table agreed with her comments, they were included in Mr. Rast's review. She thanked Mr. Rast and Staff.

Ms. Frances Meaders, a Peachtree City resident for 40 years, thought some of the items included in the report were very fixable, e.g., communication and opportunities for community/family recreation. She thought with all of the current communication capabilities, we should be able to keep the community informed. A lot of people said they would participate but did not know what was happening or when. People did not read the newspaper much any more, and she thought a city-wide web page that would allow citizens to contribute was a way to address this need. She appreciated Mr. Rast's giving the citizens the opportunity to discuss these items; they had a good time doing so.

Mr. Kelly also commented on the dragon boat racing and his not being able to see the boats because of the bushes that were planted all around the field. He later found out the city ordinance prohibited removal of trees and bushes around reservoirs. He thought grass was more protective of the soil than land and bushes. It was noted this was a requirement of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He thought the EPA was wrong in making this requirement and that it made no sense to have a park that restricted views of the lake.

Mayor Haddix wanted to chime in on the topic of "Definition and Understanding." When he attended the Open Houses, he continually heard people defining the golf cart paths as recreation. He thought this was a common understanding throughout the community even though it was not correct. In terms of interpreting the data and for making comments, terms needed to be defined to ensure everyone was on the same page.

Peachtree City Signage Program: Concepts and Recommendations

Mr. Jon Rorie, the Community Services Director, began this discussion by stating that one of the difficult responsibilities for staff, whether at the City Manager or even Council level, was trying to determine THE most important thing. Strategic planning and vision statements referred to Staff's trying to define for the community the core value or the core function for us to perform and how to move in that direction.

Mr. Rorie was going to discuss one of the issues that was covered in the ONE Peachtree City campaign, Signage. This was a huge issue in terms of the amount of impact and the problems it could create for staff. He did not want to deal with theories and principles but would be very pragmatic and very rational. He cautioned that some of the things he would say would not please everyone in the room but would go back to the City's core function and core value and the difficulty staff had trying to go down this path and get somewhere.

His understanding of the sign program in particular was that Staff had been looking at signs throughout Peachtree City for almost three years, everything from way-finding signage to MUTCD standards.

Mr. Rorie noted there were some key components in the sign program and the regulations and ordinances that needed to be maintained because they represented the character of this community.

Mr. Rorie identified the following signs that were located in Peachtree City and explained some of the issues/recommendations associated with each:

- The Welcome Sign was installed by the Rotarians at least 15 years ago and was a focal point for everyone entering the city at SR 54 /74.
 - Does this sign need to be changed? Should we capitalize on it as a common feature in our community?
- What were the general goals for simple sign programs?
 - Reduce some of the sign clutter.
 - Centrally locate the signs.
 - The signs should be characteristic and brand this community.
 - As good financial stewards of the community, it should be simple and elegant and also cost effective.
- Way-finding features were very important for outside visitors coming into the community.
- The destination signs should be customized so that people would know their location.
- Gateway signs had evolved due to a recent annexation and were important so that people would know they were in the city. There should be a sense of arrival through the use of landscaping areas.
- A huge effort had been made over the past year in areas such as the medians and the parkways. However, one of the grant projects that was launched soon after Mr. Rorie arrived in Peachtree City now had weeds in it. Since the gateways were important to us, how should we move forward?
- Maintenance and enhancement of the environment of this city was important to the city's residents evidenced by comments that were made during the ONE Peachtree City process. How should we maintain these areas; how should we move forward?
- Economic development.
- Improve pedestrian traffic safety.

There were four components Mr. Rorie wanted to discuss at this meeting:

- **Way-finding signs.**
 - This program was launched about six weeks ago.
 - The purpose was to show where you were and where you needed to go.
 - The purpose in installing some of them was to see what kind of comments we would get.
 - Most had been favorable relative to the colors and the uniqueness of the signs. A lot of people were just sick and tired of brown signs.
 - Both positive and negative e-mails had been forwarded from members of Council and other members of staff.
 - Even the negative feedback was valuable.

- Staff did not make arbitrary decisions; there was a reason for the decisions that had been made on the various issues that had been raised.
 - Sight distance – The signs were purposely placed where they were based on perception response time.
 - The decision was made to use three-line locations based on MUTCD regulations. These signs would identify locations for tourists and city facilities and would not be used for advertising. This was an economic development issue.
 - Relocation was under way. There were major difficult-to-locate right-of-way issues that were faced on SR 54 and 74.
- **Monument Signs.**
 - A lot of them were in a state of disrepair and needed to be replaced, removed, eliminated, or given a facelift.
 - These signs were all over the city and there was a high cost associated with them, an average of \$4,000 to \$6,000 each.
 - They had a large footprint but were low maintenance, which was good.
 - However, many of them needed a facelift.
- **Destination signs.**
 - They were low cost, low maintenance, and had a small footprint.
 - There was a specific place where they could be installed today.
 - Mr. Rorie showed a picture of the destination sign at the Baseball Soccer Complex.
 - Since the SR 74 widening, it had been sitting in the pole barn.
 - Maintenance personnel had painted that sign and given it a facelift for approximately \$250.
 - It would have cost \$4,000 to \$6,000 to replace it.
 - It might eventually be replaced, but at this time, this was the most cost-effective approach.
 - Different options had also been explored such as branding.
 - Digital signs had been discussed. Per city ordinance, they were not permitted and a recommendation to allow them would not be supported by staff.
 - Signs with changeable letters or static templates had also been discussed.
 - The City had a lot of facilities and associated signs.
 - Mr. Destadio pointed out that there were landscaping issues associated with some of the city signs Mr. Rorie had shown. The City had required the landscaping that was now an issue. Mr. Rorie said there were already plans to move landscape material from some of these locations to other areas in the city.
 - Mr. Rorie recommended something simple, elegant, and cost effective be used when there were multiple facilities in one location such as the Gathering Place, Welcome Center, and Rec Admin Building. He suggested a monument sign be installed at the entrance and smaller destination signs be installed inside the entrance.

- **Gateway signs.**

- The issues associated with the current signs at the city's gateways included: sign clutter, appearance, cost, and right-of-way.
- According to the Cost Manual for the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), these signs were to be fabricated and installed by DOT.
- Their signs were probably overly cost effective and, to him, they were ugly. He thought we could do better.
- This issue had come to the forefront as a result of a recent annexation.
 - A recommendation had been made for a sign that would be used at the gateways to the city.
 - It would first be installed on SR 74 South.
 - The sign was stone and capitalized on the "peach."
 - Landscaping of the sign should be appropriate and anticipate future maintenance requirements.
 - There would be right-of-way issues with the SR 54/74 gateway and Staff would get complaints about where the signs would be located. However, these were state roads with DOT rights-of-way, and there were only so many things that could be done.

Mr. Rorie said the reason he included this topic at this workshop was because there had been so much discussion about where the city was going with their sign program. There was nothing wrong with a lot of the signs we had, but they needed a facelift and we needed to address landscaping issues. However, as the signs were replaced, it was necessary that there be a plan for moving forward.

Their recommendation was to follow a path where the signs would be stone with columns and appropriate landscaping. It was not cheap but they also were not the gateway signs that were currently in place at the entrances to the city. This would be the theme for the signs throughout the city.

Council Member Dienhart asked about the individual village signs that were in such disrepair. Mr. Rorie said that would be addressed through the ONE Peachtree City campaign which had discussed the graphics for the village signs. He agreed that some of them needed cleaning but also noted that some were already stone and brick. He would not recommend changing them but thought if the change to the village signs was something simple, in the long run this could be addressed. Council Member Dienhart asked if they could be reused. Mr. Rorie said he was 90 percent sure they could be.

Council Member Learnard thought it would be nice to get some consistency in the signs. Council Member Imker agreed.

Council Member Fleisch asked if they had a rough idea of what the cost would be. Mr. Rorie said they had a very elementary cost estimate which was about \$15,000 for each sign with the potential of four locations throughout the city, over time.

Reference was made to the potential annexations being proposed for the city and whether that issue should be settled before a sign would be purchased. Mr. Rorie said we did not want to move signs, but this would always be a part of the thought process.

Mr. Rorie highlighted the following recommendations:

- Reduce sign clutter; limit future sign installations.
- Continue way-finding through tweaking.
- Remove industrial park sign.
- Facelift monument signs – static panels, painting, etc.
- Install destination signs where appropriate; with the renovations to the Rec Admin building, this would be the first place a destination sign would be needed.
- Approval was needed for the gateway sign concept so we would be ready when Southern Pines was ready to move forward with their sign.
- The gateway signage at some of the other locations would be based on funding, budgeting, years to come, right-of-way issues, etc.
- This was being reviewed from a cost-effective approach.
- Takes advantage of current assets.
- Move forward with this plan as presented.

Ms. Mary Giles, a resident of Braelinn Village, suggested that the name of the McIntosh Trail Recreation and Entertainment complex be installed on a sign that would be located on McIntosh Trail. As one drove into the complex, a sign would be posted that included an internal map of the complex that listed each venue and its location. Individual signs would then be posted at each venue. She thought the map sign might also contain changeable letters for the concert listings. Mr. Rorie thought it would be good to simplify the sign on McIntosh, but he did not know how this would work. He said he would consider it though.

Mr. Destadio wanted to emphasize maintenance, maintenance, maintenance. By using stone, the city would get a better rate of return because the signs would outlast the wooden ones which needed to be painted and also mildewed.

Ms. Wojcik pointed to the subdivision signs that often needed to be maintained. Some of them were owned by homeowners associations, but a great number of them were not. She did not think the city did a lot to help citizens take care of things themselves. People might volunteer to do some of the labor if paint was available or if water was available to water the plants, etc. This would help the overall look of the city and also cut down on costs to the city. She did not think anything had been done to try to mobilize the citizenry in this regard.

Council Member Fleisch agreed with Ms. Wojcik but also pointed out that there had been efforts in the past such as the cart path cleanup. She noted that the signs especially required a lot of effort to maintain.

Ms. Wojcik pointed out that a lot of the areas looked good five to ten years ago because the City was maintaining them. She understood that money was a problem, but removing signs, landscaping, etc., because there was less expense that way was not necessarily attractive. This was what had been done when bushes died in the area leading into the Kedron Fieldhouse, a facility that frequently had out-of-town visitors.

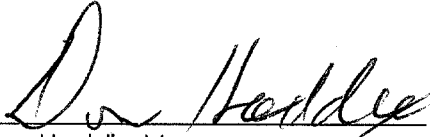
A resident of The Highlands subdivision shared how their subdivision had borne the cost of replacing their sign when it needed to be replaced.

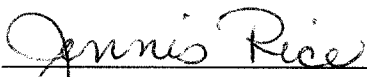
Ms. Tricia Stearns, who operated the Community Garden, agreed that if the City would give a push, more people would volunteer.

Since he had not heard any objections from City Council, Mr. Rorie said they would move forward and tie these pieces together.

Dr. Pennington thought the most important thing of all was that there were other projects and programs like this. He thought they should be brought to a conclusion so they could be accomplished. He appreciated the efforts of Mr. Rorie, Mr. Rast, and everyone else in that regard.

There being no further items to discuss, the workshop ended at 8:06 p.m.


Don Haddix, Mayor


Jennis Rice, Recording Secretary