

Planning Commission of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 12, 2024
6:30 PM

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Scott Ritenour opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Other Commissioners in attendance included Mitzi Johnston, Felicia Reeves, Andrew Kriz, and Alternate Ray Liotta. Vice Chairman Kenneth Hamner was absent. Also present were Planning Director Robin Cailloux, Senior Planner Lora Hooks, Recording Secretary Martha Barksdale, and IT Specialists Steven Shelton and Jadyn Talman.

Additions or Deletions

None

Announcements and Reports

1. Development Status Report

Hooks explained this was a periodic review of ongoing development in the City. Beginning with residential projects, she noted that Cresswind was about 90% complete, and Everton was at 85%. The single-family portion of Laurel Brooke was about 43% complete, while one of the six townhomes was complete and another was underway. The Collier Hills townhomes on the north end of MacDuff Parkway had not started construction, but the initial plat was approved last summer.

Mill Farms was annexed and rezoned, then had a modified rezoning. That caused a re-do of construction plans, which were still being reviewed, along with the plat. The Rockaway townhomes project was coming back to life, Hooks announced, saying she was contacted in the last week by someone working on the building design. Smokerise Corners was about 73% complete. The residential portion of Towson Village was getting started, with nine or 10 homes in progress, while the Commission would be looking at the conceptual plat for the new phase, called Towson Place, later in the meeting. Wilksmoor Woods, with 180 properties, was now complete.

Hooks noted that several projects needed Planning Commission liaisons. Johnston volunteered for Towson Place, and Reeves for Collier Hills.

Ritenour, referring to the Rockaway project, asked if there were any time constraints that would require them to go through the process again. Cailloux explained that commercial projects had to re-start if no progress had been made in 12 months, but residential did not if it had been platted. Hooks added that the Rockaway construction plans were approved, and she believed they had done most or all of the site work.

Moving on to commercial projects, Hooks said construction drawings for the

Aberdeen mixed-use project were currently under review. Aventure Aviation was ramping back up, with a land disturbance permit issued recently, and Bridge Park Medical on Commerce Drive was working on getting a land disturbance permit.

The CertainTEED expansion was ongoing. Site work was going on at Gerber Collision on SR 74 South, and they had a building permit. Most of the building was complete at Gerresheimer. A grading-only permit had been issued for Project Glass on Naeco Way, and their construction plans were under review. There had been no movement on the Gimme Shelter projects. Hooks said the conceptual site plan was approved in March 2023, so it was about to expire if they did not submit for the next phase.

They would be looking at the Highway 54 West development later in the meeting, Hooks remarked. Staff was waiting for revisions on the site construction plans from Hoshizaki for its expansion project. Hooks said she believed the developers were doing a re-design on the industrial building project at 1301 Moba Drive. Staff was completing their review of the site construction plans for the new building at Integrity Fusion.

Hooks called for representatives, and Liotta said he would take Hoshizaki, while Kriz volunteered to handle the industrial building.

There had been no movement in awhile on the Laurel Brooke condos, and Cailloux said they would be checking to see if it had expired. Construction was moving ahead on the Meditec manufacturing facility, Hooks noted. Moon Valley Nursery was working to obtain a land disturbance permit and a building permit. Johnston offered to be the liaison for the nursery, and Kriz took on Meditec.

Staff was reviewing site development plans for Peachtree Cardiology, and the Planning Commission would review the landscape plan later at this meeting. A building permit was issued July 2023 for the Residence Inn on World Drive, and Cailloux said they were moving dirt. Council had approved a site plan for a self-storage facility on SR 74 South and were now reviewing site construction plans. The Sherwin-Williams on Crosstown had just received a temporary certificate of occupancy to move in and would be getting a permanent one in order to open.

A land disturbance permit had been issued for Silon's expansion. There was a delay at 110 Wilshire Village Drive. That property would no longer be the Starr's Mill Medical Office, but no plans had been stated, although Hooks said there was a rumor that they would be seeing a new conceptual site plan. There had been no movement on SWI Machinery since the conceptual site plan was approved in May. That was tied to the Project Glass, Cailloux remarked, so they were working on designing the road expansion now. Cailloux said she expected to see something from them soon.

Take 5 Oil Change received a permit to demolish the existing building, Hooks

reported, and Staff was reviewing their site construction plans. Site construction and building construction were in progress at The Gates Medical Office, and the Planning Commission had approved the conceptual site plan for West Georgia Dermatology in January.

Other liaisons appointed were: Ritenour, self-storage; Kriz, Silon; Reeves, West Georgia Dermatology, Reeves. They decided to wait on assigning someone for 110 Wilshire Village Drive.

Approval of Minutes

1. Planning Commission Meeting January 8, 2024

Kriz moved to approve the January 15, 2024, meeting minutes. Johnston seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing

None

Old Agenda Items

1. Conceptual Site Plan, Highway 54 West Development, 1941 W HWY 54

This was in the northeast part of the city, across SR 54 from Longboat subdivision, zoned Limited Use Commercial (LUC-30). Cailloux recalled that the Commission reviewed this and had useful feedback at the January 8 meeting. The Commission had concerns over dead-end parking areas, asked for designated golf cart parking spaces, and wanted clarity on the location of the path connection. While they understood that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) was the approving entity for the driveway, the Commission wanted information about the driveway permit when it became available. The plan showed what Cailloux called a "slightly odd" configuration where they hoped to preserve some trees. If that was kept, the Commission wanted the trees shown on the plan.

The applicant had provided a revised plan. Cailloux showed how they had adjusted parking at the rear of the site to eliminate the dead-end parking and allow vehicle and pedestrian traffic circulation throughout. They had added 30 dedicated golf cart parking spaces and indicated the connection to the existing path. The revised layout did have an impact on parking, reducing the number of spaces from 367 to 332, plus the 30 cart spaces; the required number of parking spaces was 327.

The zoning conditions included a tree and landscape buffer along SR 54 and required a 50-foot-wide connection for the potential location of a landing for a pedestrian bridge over the highway.

Speaking for the applicant, Jason Walls of Highland Land Planning, said there were hardly any specimen trees on the site. Even in the area designated as park space, there were no large trees, so they had the opportunity to clear everything out and do something nice, he stated.

Reeves said she had visited the site, and it seemed small for a development such as this. What interactions had they had with the residents who lived behind here?

Architect Jefferson Brown said they went to the Planning Department to get phone numbers for area residents, and they reached out, but no one responded. He stated that his firm always tried to work with the neighbors and felt they had done their part.

Reeves noted that traffic was always a concern, and it appeared that a study was part of the process. Walls said they had a proposal from a consultant to do that study but were waiting on this approval to get it going. A study was mandated to get the permit from GDOT, he commented.

This revised plan appeared addressed the issues the Commissioners brought up, Johnston remarked.

Kriz said he, too, appreciated the updated plan, but wondered why the golf cart parking was tucked away in the back. The path connection was in the back, Walls stated, and they wanted to keep them separate to prevent cars from parking in them.

Would this be the time to bring up bike parking? Kriz asked Cailloux. This was the only time, she replied, saying they could require dedicated bike parking near the main entrances of each building. Brown said they hadn't considered bike parking but were open to it.

Liotta said this was a significantly better plan in terms of circulation and emergency services access. He then wondered if they needed an agreement with the adjacent property to extend the cart paths? Cailloux said it was city-owned property, plus there was a 50-foot easement on either side.

Next, he had some questions about loading, saying there should be one space for the two smaller buildings and the building on the right should have its own dedicated space. He understood that loading was not required if a building was 2,000 feet or less, but there should be at least one space for up to 25,000 square feet.

They had some spaces above and beyond, Brown replied, but they didn't know who the users would be and the use dictated that requirement. Cailloux explained that this was a conceptual site plan, created just to ensure that what was proposed would fit on the property. In the final site plan stage, Staff would verify the correct number of loading spaces.

Liotta asked if a building was divided into spaces smaller than 2,000 square feet, did it not require a loading area? Cailloux said she would have to review the

ordinance, mentioning that it had been a long time since a space of this size had been built. She acknowledged that back-of-house operations were tricky, especially in sites like this where there was access from all sides.

Some parking seemed to be in the side and rear setbacks, he continued; was that a problem? Cailloux said it was not; only the front setback usually had restrictions on parking.

Johnston clarified with Walls that all the parking served the entire development. She then asked about a solid black line at an exit, and Cailloux said it was a stop bar. Cailloux asked Walls if they would have to evaluate signalization, and he said the traffic study would look at everything.

Johnston asked about the dumpsters shown on the plan, and Cailloux said they wanted to ensure that they were not visible from SR 54, but also kept away from nearby residences. The location on this plan would meet the needs of the trucks but was tucked away from the residential lots. Would two dumpsters be sufficient? Johnston asked, and Walls said there would be eight—two locations with four dumpsters each. They might add a third spot to serve the middle buildings.

Ritenour commended Brown and his team for improving the traffic flow and adding golf cart parking. He said he would like them to consider bicycle parking. Bicycle parking and electric vehicle charging were a couple of things they needed to look at going forward, Ritenour stated, noting there was nothing in the ordinances about it, but he would like to see it added to the site plan.

Kriz said he was glad to see the golf cart parking and would like to see it required by ordinance.

Kriz moved to approve Conceptual Site Plan, Highway 54 West Development, 1941 W Hwy. 54, with the condition that appropriate bicycle parking be added. Johnston seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

New Agenda Items

1. Landscape Plan, Peachtree Cardiology, 100 McWilliams Drive

This property was at the intersection of SR 74 and McWilliams Drive and was zoned Office-Institutional (OI), backing up to the Beechwood subdivision. Hooks reminded the Commission that they okayed a front buffer reduction from 60 feet to 40 feet when they approved the conceptual site plan. That meant the developer must install 20% more caliper inches of trees, which would be at least 72 caliper inches of canopy trees and 48 inches of understory trees. They planned to provide 72 inches of canopy trees and 66 inches of understory trees.

A variance was granted to this property for the 75-foot transitional yard requirement between a non-residential and a residential zoning district. Hooks pointed out that

area and said a condition required additional evergreen landscaping between the parking lot and adjacent residential lots. The developer had paid a lot of attention to this area in order to address concerns from the neighbors. They were proposing three species of evergreen trees and shrubs to create a continuous visual screen and flowering cherry trees would add color. Hooks pointed out deciduous trees that would provide fall color, including scarlet oak and red maples.

She remarked that residents had been concerned about the stormwater structures. They would be hidden by the evergreen trees and painted a dark color to blend in.

Staff was of the opinion that this landscape plan for Peachtree Cardiology exceeded the requirements of the City ordinances and all the conditions placed on the site and recommended approval. Should the Planning Commission approve the landscape plan, Staff recommended the following condition: relocate the three red maples and the one scarlet oak from the south side of the property to the 40-foot front buffer area. Repairing a GDOT drainage issue was going to cause a lot of landscaping in front to be removed, so Staff was requesting this relocation to help replace those trees.

Ritenour noted that this was not a public hearing, and comments were not allowed, but he did appreciate the neighbors who had raised concerns about drainage. He then asked about the trees Staff had suggested for relocation, and Cailloux replied that they selected those to be moved because they were close to the wall around the stormwater facility, and the City Engineer did not like trees within 15 feet of an engineered wall.

Walls again represented this applicant, saying he had the architect and contractor with him, too. They had no objection to relocating the trees and would like a pre-installation meeting with Staff to ensure everything was in the right place before they started digging.

Liotta asked how much of the buffer on SR 74 was being preserved? The site had been graded and cleared, Cailloux replied, so all of the trees there now would remain. Walls pointed out that the area in the 40 feet consisted of mostly pines, so it was good for them to move some more colorful trees there.

On the east side, the parking lot was higher than the residential lots, Liotta continued, and he thought an evergreen hedgerow at the curb line would help alleviate glare from the parking lot. Walls pointed out a group of shrubs 100 feet long that should block the light spray. Cailloux noted that no vehicles would park facing the houses, but asked if they could do some rearranging to get more shrubs between the parking lot and the overstory trees.

Liotta, however, noted that a lot of people backed into parking spaces and in the lower parking lot, their headlights would point straight at the residences. Cailloux said it might be a problem in the winter when the sun set earlier, but she a medical

office wouldn't be open long after dark. Walls remarked that there were over 100 shrubs on the site, so it shouldn't be a problem to do exactly what they were asking. Liotta told him the shrubs needed to be evergreens.

Liotta pointed out four cherries on the eastern side property line and stated he thought they should be swapped out for evergreens, but Cailloux and Walls told him those flowering trees were specifically requested by residents.

Kriz said he did not recall seeing stormwater so highly visible in other plans; was there a reason it was indicated so prominently? It was a major concern of the residents, Cailloux responded, noting that there were always minimum standards that had to be met.

Was it possible to plant smaller plants with less intrusive roots along the stormwater areas? Johnston asked. Cailloux said the City Engineer was adamant that there be no plantings within 15 feet of an engineered wall.

Reeves said all her questions had been answered.

Ritenour agreed with Liotta about the buffering of the lights from the parking lot.

A resident in the audience had a comment, but Ritenour again said this was not a public hearing. Cailloux told them Staff and the Commission would be glad to discuss concerns after the meeting.

2. Elevations - Request for Waiver, Osmose Expansion, 635 HWY 74 S

Cailloux showed where Osmose was located, along with a conceptual site plan that was approved in 2014, with checkmarks showing the buildings that had been completed. They were preparing to construct another building on the site, and the developer had requested a waiver of the architectural review, which was allowed by Section 724 of the ordinance if the building would not be visible from the street.

She showed photos of the views from SR 74 heading south. There was a private drive into the industrial development, but the existing buildings were not visible, and this new building would be behind them. She said the decision to waive the review was at the Planning Commission's discretion.

Walls told the Commission that building would not be visible and offered to answer questions.

Kriz asked if the building would be similar to what was currently there? Walls pointed out woods and the laydown yard on the conceptual site plan and said there was just one spot where the building would be visible. They would be using similar materials on that wall only, he commented. Also, this new building would be connected to an existing building and look like one building.

Liotta had no objection if it was a very similar building.

Reeves asked why they were seeking the waiver, and Walls said it would save them time.

Johnston noted that the conceptual site plan was from 2014; was there a time limit to build? Cailloux replied that there had been continuous progress. She noted that they could go through the motions, but she didn't want the Planning Commission ever to feel like they were a rubber stamp.

The waiver was fine with Ritenour as long as there was continuity between the building designs.

Johnston moved to approve the waiver request for the Osmose Expansion, 635 Hwy 74 S with the condition that continuity be maintained in the appearance of the buildings. Kriz seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Conceptual Plat, Towson Place, Deanwood Terrace Extension

Towson Place was the southern continuation of the Towson Village subdivision, zoned Limited Use Residential (LUR-22) when it was annexed from Fayette County. It was 11.4 acres and was approved for 21 lots with an average size of 9,600 square feet. The conceptual plat showed an overview of the entire development in order to give an idea of how Towson Place connected, and Hooks also presented a zoomed-in version with more details of Towson Place.

There were some conditions attached to the rezoning, which included:

- *No more than 21 single-family lots*
- *Accessory uses permitted.*
- *Both the front and rear setbacks would be 20 feet for main structure, 10 feet for garages. Side setbacks were 0, but there was a building separation of 10 feet.*
- *At least 25% of the houses must have a bedroom and bathroom on the main level.*
- *Houses must be faced with either brick, stone, cementitious stucco, or cementitious siding.*
- *Each elevation visible from a public street should include architectural detailing to avoid blank walls.*
- *The homeowners association (HOA) would have the responsibility of maintaining all parks and landscaped areas.*

No greenbelts or buffers were required, but the City Engineer had requested a 50-foot city greenbelt to connect Deanwood Terrace to a 50-foot multi-use path easement for future connection to the south and

east should it be needed. Cailloux pointed out that this was for a path, not a road.

The land development ordinance (LDO) required open space of at least three acres per 100 dwelling units, which amounted to about 1/3 of an acre for the proposed development. The amount of open space proposed, including a small pocket park, was 3.75 acres, Hooks noted. Cul-de-sacs were not to be longer than 1,200 feet, and this one would be 970, so it met that requirement.

Staff was of the opinion that the conceptual plat met the zoning conditions and the LDO standards, was in conformance with the approved conceptual site plan from August 2023, and therefore recommended approval.

Daniel Fields represented the applicant. Johnston and Reeves had no questions, but Kriz asked about the location of the pocket park, saying it was shown on the left-hand side of the street in one drawing they had been given and on the right side in another. Cailloux indicated which one was correct and said the property across from the park was what was designated for a path connection.

Liotta said he appreciated Hooks' explanation of the engineer's comments. He went on to ask if there was any way to impose a radial line as the boundary between lots one and two so that the house on lot one could be more oriented towards the street?

Fields told him they could look at it, but their engineer had trouble getting to the minimum width on that lot. Hooks said they also had to get more than 50% of that lot into the south side of the development.

Cailloux commented that the Planning Commission was the platting authority, so if they wanted them to re-look at that, they could table this and ask them to come back. Liotta remarked that the house on lot one would not be oriented the same way as the other houses, and Fields said he believed they could position the house to conform.

Kriz commented that he did not agree with this density at the edge of the city, but that was not what they were discussing. Reeves agreed.

Ritenour asked Liotta if he believed lot one's shape was important enough to ask the developers to re-consider? Liotta replied that Fields had said they had the ability to position the house in a way to maintain continuity. Cailloux commented that Staff could add a flag on the permit software that would alert them to look for this. Liotta said that was a good compromise, and Cailloux said she would do that, but asked that it not be a condition of approval.

Kriz moved to approve the conceptual plat for Towson Place, Deanwood Terrace Extension. Reeves seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Workshop Items

1. Planning Commission 101, Part 2

Finally, Cailloux said they would complete the Planning Commission 101 overview that she presented annually, and, while it would be brief, she encouraged the Commissioners to ask questions.

At the previous meeting, they talked about land development from zoning all the way to the granting of a certificate of occupancy. This portion of the presentation explored the purpose of the Planning Commission. The State of Georgia did not require a Planning Commission, but Cailloux said she did not know of a community that, if it had zoning, did not have one. In Peachtree City, the Planning Commission made decisions at certain points in the land development process and made recommendations to Council on zonings and annexations.

The Peachtree City Land Development Ordinance (LDO) said the Planning Commission was there to guide and accomplish coordinated and harmonious development in accordance with existing and future needs and to protect the health, general safety, and welfare of the public, and to do this in an efficient and economic process, which she said meant they were respectful of the property owners' time while maintaining the City's high standard.

That ordinance also gave the Planning Commission and the City Planner status as the official platting authorities. The Planning Commission handled subdivisions or anything with public roads and infrastructure, while Cailloux handled minor subdivisions and matters such as relocation of property lines.

She noted there was no discretion granted to the Planning Commission when it came to subdividing land, but discretion was allowed in decisions involving the development of that land. The Commissioners had often heard Staff refer to "should" statements and "shall" statements. A "should" statement meant the Commissioners could exercise that discretionary power.

While the Planning Commission could not direct Cailloux to undertake any rezoning or ordinance changes, they could still communicate that was their desire, and she could carry that forward to the City Manager. However, the Planning Commission was the final decider in several elements of land development, including the conceptual site plan, building elevations and the power to waive those, landscape plan, and conceptual site plat—all of which they had reviewed that night. Staff's role was to ensure the plan met the minimum requirements and to suggest conditions that were above and beyond the minimum standard. She reminded them that applicants had the right to appeal their decisions to Council.

The Planning Commission served in an advisory role to City Council when they heard requests for rezonings or annexations or for text amendments to zoning or the LDO. Staff reviewed the requests for compliance with the six criteria listed in

the ordinance and with the Comprehensive Plan. They also summarized the Planning Commission's comments and reported those and the recommendation to Council.

Who did the Planning Commission represent? Peachtree City had more than 39,500 residents as of 2022. About 29% were age 18 or younger, while 18% were 65 or older. Around 8% were Hispanic or Latino; 23% were non-White. Approximately 7% had a disability, and 7% lived within the Federal definition of poverty, up from 5% in 2020.

Cailloux listed some of the basic skills a Commissioner should possess. They should have good listening skills and be open-minded and not come to meetings with their minds already made up. They needed to be able to consider the overall public good, not just the views of the people who showed up at the meeting. They also had to consider long-term interests of the City, such as providing for green spaces and path connections. Objectivity was a must, along with the ability to make fair, consistent, and impartial decisions. Finally, a Planning Commissioner had to be willing to make a decision, Because it is impossible to have perfectly complete knowledge about the future; sometimes the Planning Commission is called upon to make the best decision they can with the information available to them, Cailloux remarked.

She reminded them of the ethics involved with being a Planning Commissioner. They had all signed a financial disclosure with the City Clerk. Often, Cailloux noted, there were questions about when they should recuse themselves from a vote. Unless they had a direct financial interest, meaning they would earn or lose money based on the decision they were making, they did not have to recuse themselves. They should recuse themselves if a decision involved their own property or if it would have a direct effect on the value of their property. Another reason to recuse was if the decision would have a direct financial effect on a member of their immediate family.

Planning Commissioners should not accept gifts or bribes. Cailloux said the City had a policy limiting the value of gifts to \$100, but she said she encouraged her Staff to stay away from anything more than \$5. Commissioners must not misuse public funds by inflating their expense reports or use Staff for personal purposes. They also should not have communications with applicants outside of public hearings.

Next, Cailloux offered ways they could maintain good relationships with Staff, Council, and the community. They needed to review the materials provided prior to the meetings and ask questions in advance so Staff could be prepared with the answers. It was fine to disagree with Staff recommendations, but it is a best practice to provide reasons why they make the decisions they make.

She asked them not to assume that what they read on social media was factual,

but to please check with Staff. Also, the Commissioners should tell Staff what they needed to make informed decisions.

Finally, if City Council did not accept their recommendations on zonings or annexations, the Commissioners should keep in mind that Council was under different pressures, such as service levels and budgets as well as political pressures. She again urged the Commissioners to make clear why they made their recommendations so Council would be able to take that into consideration.

Cailloux went on to say that sometimes leaders thought it was bad to have questions in front of the public, but that was not true. The purpose of having these meetings was to start with what someone had proposed and make improvements. If the applicant changed their plans before going to Council because of public comments, that is evidences that the process is working.

She reviewed a list of training opportunities, saying she would be glad to help them register. Cailloux also noted there were numerous resources the Commissioners could utilize through the City website. The Zoning Code and the LDO were there, along with the Planning Commission's own page. That page contained a library with this presentation, the bylaws, and the Georgia Zoning Procedure Law.

The Planning and Development site included information on long-range planning and special projects. Documents found there included historical plans going back to the original 1972 plan. There was also information on current development with links to maps. Active rezoning cases were listed and the legal advertisements were there, too.

Hooks said there was nothing on the agenda for the February 26 meeting, and Ritenour said they should cancel it. The next meeting would be March 11.

Kriz moved to adjourn at 8:13 p.m. Reeves seconded. Motion carried unanimously.



Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary



Scott Ritenour, Chairman