

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 15, 2024
6:30 PM

Call to Order

The City Council of Peachtree City held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at City Hall. Mayor Kim Learnard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Council Members in attendance: Suzanne Brown, Frank Destadio, Clinton Holland, and Laura Johnson.

Meeting Video Link: [Peachtree City City Council Meeting - February 15th, 2024](#)

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Presentation

A. Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community

Keith Larson, joined by several dozen other local cyclists, presented the City with a plaque commemorating its designation once again as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. This was the third renewal at the Bronze level, and Larson said it was obtained by completing a 92-page survey that looked at the bicycle network, public safety measures, and City budget and adopted public policies, among other things. A report card provided ways for the City to move up to Silver level. The Mayor thanked him, saying this designation showed that Peachtree City was always promoting a safe and healthy bicycling experience.

Announcements, Awards, Special Recognition

None

Public Comment

None

Agenda Changes

Minutes

A. January 25 & 26, 2024 City Council Retreat Minutes

Holland moved to approve the January 25 and 26, 2024 City Council Retreat Minutes. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

B. February 1, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Holland moved to approve the February 1, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes and the February 1, 2024, Executive Session Minutes. Johnson seconded. Motion carried 4-0-1 with Destadio abstaining due to his absence from the meeting.

C. February 1, 2024 Executive Session Minutes

Holland moved to approve the February 1, 2024, Executive Session Minutes and the February 1, 2024, Executive Session Minutes. Johnson seconded. Motion carried 4-0-1 with Destadio abstaining due to his absence from the meeting.

Consent Agenda

Brown moved to approve Consent Agenda items A-D. Holland seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- A. Stormwater Facility Maintenance Agreements for Multiple Private Developments**
- B. Purchase of Rams (extrication equipment) for apparatus (Fire Department)**
- C. Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA) Grant Application- SR 54/Huddleston Intersection Improvement**
- D. Purchase of lighting fixtures for Fred Brown Jr. Amphitheater**

Old Agenda Items

None

New Agenda Items

- A. 02-24-03 Resolution to Transmit Proposed Local Amendment to Plumbing Code to DCA (Robin Cailloux)**

Planning and Development Director Robin Cailloux explained that Peachtree City was within the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, one of 11 water planning districts created by the State. They adopted a plan in 2022 to create projects that its members had to implement.

This item was an update of the local plumbing code. To do that, Council must adopt a resolution to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and transmit the proposed ordinance modifications to them for a 60-day review. After that, she would return with an adoption motion. Once adopted, the new code would be applied during inspections for new building permits.

A brief summary of what this code did included reducing maximum flow in bathroom and kitchen fixtures, adding water cooling tower efficiency standards, providing minimum standards for landscape irrigation fixtures tied to public water systems (Cailloux noted that irrigation was not required), expanding golf courses' ability to use reclaimed septic wastewater for irrigation, and adding reference to American National Standards Institute (ANSI) water efficiency code as acceptable engineering practices in water system design.

A building code official was present to answer questions, she stated, and staff requested adoption of the resolution to transmit this amendment so the 60-day review period could begin.

Holland wanted to know if this was both a State and a Federal requirement. Cailloux said this was a State requirement, but there might be Federal reasons. Holland said he suspected there were, but he had no objections.

Destadio moved to approve New Agenda item 02-24-03, Resolution to Transmit Proposed Local Amendment to Plumbing Code to DCA. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

B. 02-24-04 Commemorative Naming Request by Rotary Club of Peachtree City- Frances Meaders Council Chambers (Kim Learnard, Mayor)

Learnard noted that this was not a benefactor request as the agenda stated, but a commemorative request.

The Mayor remarked that Peachtree City was fortunate to still have many of its founders still around, including Frances Meaders, who was the first City Clerk. Meaders and her family moved to Peachtree City in 1972, and Meaders accepted the job the next year. Learnard read a description of what she accomplished and how, under her tenure, Peachtree City grew. Meaders stayed on the job until 1995, serving under four mayors. Her job by then had expanded to be called Director of Administrative Services. She was the first female member of the Peachtree City Rotary Club and remained active in the community in retirement.

The Mayor concluded that if ever there was a city matriarch, it was Frances Meaders. The proposal tonight was to name City Council chambers the Frances Meaders City Council Chambers.

Destadio said he had the privilege of meeting Meaders and called her a wonderful woman.

Holland moved to approve New Agenda item 02-24-04, Benefactor Naming Request by Rotary Club of Peachtree City- Frances Meaders Council Chambers. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

C. 02-24-05 Commemorative Naming Request- Ralph N. Jones (Kim Learnard, Mayor)

Learnard said Ralph N. Jones became Peachtree City's second Mayor in 1966 and served until 1969. As Mayor, he purchased the City's first fire truck, began Fire Services, and started the Police Department. He was a founding member of the City's first church, First Presbyterian, in 1966 and remained active throughout his life. He was a member of the Peachtree City Development Authority from 1970 to 1986. He was a founding member of the Peachtree City Rotary Club.

Jones served in the Army and was instrumental in starting Peachtree City's Boy Scout program. He brought Mabie Bell Industries, along with his family, to Peachtree City in 1962 and also operated two Valvoline businesses until 1992.

The proposal to Council was to dedicate a picnic table and monument sign at the Pinecrest boat ramp and rename the ramp the Ralph N. Jones Memorial Boat Ramp. Since the ramp was not named presently, Learnard said this would be creating a new City park. The Mayor suggested they place a condition that this would not exceed \$7,000. She also suggested replacing the bench at the ramp because it was in poor condition.

Destadio moved to approve New Agenda item 2-24-05, naming the Pinecrest Board Ramp the Ralph N. Jones Memorial Boat Ramp with funding not to exceed \$7,000. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Holland said Learnard should get credit for these commemorations because she went to all the Council Members to explain why they were being proposed and to make sure they were all on board.

Public Hearings

None

Council/Staff Topics

A. 54 Reliever Study

The discussion of a SR 54 reliever study was carried over from the previous week's Council workshop. Learnard said Holland had done a lot of research into traffic and transportation issues.

Holland reported there had been four traffic studies since 2001 on several different topics and areas, but there had never been one on the full SR 54 corridor. He stated that this Council had inherited a 20-year mess along SR 54, and it was the most common concern they heard from citizens. He said everyone on Council promised voters they would work on this, and now it was time to start.

He acknowledged that this was a multi-county, complex traffic issue that was a regional problem. This undertaking would be long and hard, Holland stated, and they needed to start now to work with other jurisdictions to fix these traffic issues for future generations.

These issues would need a definitive engineering traffic study that defined expectations for a connectivity working group that Council, with the aid of the City Manager, should start to create with the surrounding municipalities, plus Fayette and Coweta counties. This group would work together on a solution to traffic along the SR 54 corridor with the help of GDOT, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), and other State and Federal agencies. Holland said this was a directive in the Fayette County Comprehensive Transportation Plan from five years ago, but no one had taken any action.

He concluded by saying they could begin by deciding to reach out to the

stakeholders: Fayette County, Coweta County, Fayetteville, Sharpsburg, Peachtree City, and possibly Tyrone and Senoia.

The Mayor asked the Council Members what they thought. Johnson said she would like to know how much a study would cost and how long it would take.

She asked about the term Connectivity Working Group, and Holland said it was in the 2019 Transportation Plan. He thought it should include Fayetteville to Sharpsburg. Johnson asked what the first step should be. The first step, Holland said, and Learnard agreed, was to have the City Manager reach out to those other jurisdictions and see if they were interested.

It was a good idea, and they had talked about it long enough, Destadio remarked. He said they would need full buy-ins from all the entities involved. The Mayor had worked with this a long time, holding meetings with the other parties, but it had never gone beyond the first steps. He said he would be interested in seeing how they would get their buy-in; it took more than them saying they were in, Destadio remarked; they would have to pony up and get involved.

That was true, Holland replied, saying the start would be to get unanimity on this Council. Destadio said he believed they had that; now they had to get the other Councils involved.

Brown remarked that a lot of additional traffic burden had been added to Peachtree's City's traffic with the building of the QTS Data Center and the plans for the soccer center. They might have to look at widening SR 54. Brown stated she was adamant that she did not want to see TDK Boulevard opened to Coweta County because that provided a solution for Coweta at the expense of Peachtree City's traffic. However, there was a lot they could do on SR 54. They might want to reach out to Newnan.

Holland agreed but said they should now focus on Sharpsburg to Fayetteville.

In summary, Learnard said it was fair to say that Council fully supported a Connectivity Working Group. However, Curnow had a lot of projects to get through, including 15 engineering projects mentioned at the last workshop. Budget time was right around the corner, too. She hoped they could identify stakeholders and talk to them about getting together by early summer.

It would be key to identify all the stakeholders and put a plan together that talked about communications, Curnow stated. He believed it was important that the County Commissions have representation. If that is what Council was interested in, they could identify all the stakeholders and come back with a plan.

Destadio said he was sure those stakeholders would want to know a rough cost. Curnow agreed.

B. Senior Tax Exemption

Brown said she wanted to discuss the need to update the senior tax exemption. In 2005, she noted, the citizens of Peachtree City voted to approve municipal tax exemption for property owners 65 or older who had household incomes of \$30,000 or less and who were approved by Fayette County for a homestead exemption. People who met those criteria had to apply for the exemption at City Hall and that process was underway through April 1, Brown stated.

If approved for this local exemption, the assessed value of the home would be lowered by \$5,000 when calculating the Peachtree City portion of the property tax bill. In 2005, that meant the property tax bill would be reduced by about \$34; in 2024, it would be about \$40, and Brown said that amount was not sufficient to meet the goal of relieving the tax burden on senior citizens in today's economy. No adjustments in the amount of the exemption or qualifying income had been made since the passage of the exemption in 2005. Brown said there was no clause that established a percentage annual increase even though cost of living increases in Social Security and other benefits meant that some seniors who would have qualified originally now had incomes too high to qualify. Last year 80 people received the exemption.

Brown said Social Security cost of living data showed that the income limit should have increased to more than \$44,000 and the exemption amount should have been more than \$7,500. Property values had increased at a higher rate than the cost of living, making it more appropriate to raise the exemption a little higher, she remarked, suggesting \$15,000 or \$20,000 off the appraised value of a house. At \$15,000, the resident's Peachtree City tax bill would be reduced by \$150, and it would be \$200 if there was a \$20,000 exemption. With just 80 people qualifying, that would be \$16,000 in reduced revenue; even if four times as many people qualified, it would still be under \$65,000 in reduced taxes.

Brown suggested the exemption be increased to \$20,000 and the household maximum income raised to \$45,000 with an annual increase of \$3,000 to both parameters. This \$3,000 was corrected by Brown to 3% later in the meeting.

She said City Attorney Ted Meeker had sent her the documents relating to the 2005 actions and had explained what they needed to do to get this done. First, Council had to approve a resolution, then run an ad in the newspaper the week before the bill was introduced in the legislature. Once approved by the legislature, Council would have to call for a special referendum on the issue. If approved by referendum, it would become effective January 1, 2025.

Brown said legislative action on a municipal issue could be approved outside the legislative session calendar, and local Reps. Josh Bonner and Karen Mathiak were on board. She would speak with Sens. Marty Harbin and Derrick Jackson if needed.

Brown said she would be willing to help in any way she could to put this to a new vote and wanted to know Council's thoughts.

Destadio verified that only Peachtree City voters could vote in the referendum, and Holland asked what were some potential pitfalls.

Meeker noted that, historically, referendums did not have escalator clauses; the exemption was set at what was voted on. However, if they put this forward to legislative counsel and they blessed it, Council could try. Brown said she believed it had to be a fixed number, and Meeker agreed, saying if they wanted to raise it in the future, they would have to go through the process again. Brown said that is what she wanted to avoid, so it would be nice to put it forward with a 3% escalation each year. Meeker told her he was not sure they could legally do that, but if legislative counsel blessed it, then the voters could decide. However, he had never seen it done before.

Learnard said she would like to learn more, with Holland and Destadio agreeing. Johnson pointed out that she had heard a 3% increase and also \$3,000 increase mentioned. Which was it? Brown said 3%. Would that ever max out? Johnson asked, and how did Brown come up with that number? Brown said she looked at cost of living numbers and the consumer price index, and 3% was about average. She noted, too, there had been a 20% increase in property values.

Johnson asked if the state reps had seen the plan? Brown said they had told her they would support this. Destadio asked if they had seen the whole plan, and Brown told him she had given them the general idea. Destadio said he did not know if the legislators would get behind them 100%, but Meeker pointed out that they were generally responsive on local legislation if a Council was unanimous in its support.

Learnard asked if this would be a referendum in a municipal special election? Yes, Brown said, but it could be done in conjunction with the November general election. Julio said that was correct if Council called a special election at least 90 days prior. However, the City would still have to pay for that special election, which was typically around \$60,000. One concern that had been brought up was two separate voting locations if the election was done separately, Julio continued, saying if they could call for it within 90 days, voting could be done at one location. The cost would still be about \$60,000.

Brown noted that early voting would only have to be held at the Peachtree City Library. Julio said there would still be a cost to the City.

Holland remarked that Curnow had been given several time-intensive tasks that night. Curnow said it was Council's decision if they wanted to prioritize this. He was concerned about time because there were requirements regarding advertising and getting it in front of the legislature. Council also needed to understand there would

be an additional cost of putting on this election.

Learnard asked about waiting, and Julio said if they waited until next year, they could hold the referendum in conjunction with the municipal elections at no additional cost. Crossover day in the legislature was February 29, Meeker said, but there were some exceptions, so he thought they would be okay. However, he advised them to do something no later than the first meeting in March if they wanted to proceed this year.

This looked like a great project for next year, Learnard said. That would give them time to run the numbers and minimize the impact on staff. She agreed that this needed to be considered but was hesitant about paying \$60,000 for a special election when they could get it done next year at no additional cost.

Holland said he supported the concept but agreed that it would be best to put it on next year's agenda. Destadio concurred. Brown noted that the numbers would be higher next year, and the Mayor acknowledged that was true.

C. 9:30 a.m. City Council meetings

Learnard observed that many people did not have time to attend evening Council meetings, so they were considering moving the second meeting of every month to 9:30 a.m., starting Thursday, April 18. Holland said they would try this out and see what kind of response they got before they made it permanent.

Executive Session

Holland moved to adjourn to executive session at 7:22 p.m. to discuss threatened or pending litigation and the purchase, sale, or lease of real estate. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

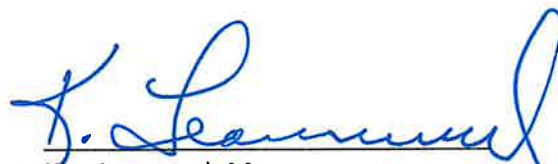
Destadio moved to reconvene in regular session at 7:34 p.m. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

There being no further business, Holland moved to adjourn the meeting. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.


Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary


Kim Learnard, Mayor