

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 18, 2024
9:30 AM

Call to Order

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met in regular session on Thursday, April 18, 2024. Mayor Kim Learnard called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Council members attending: Laura Johnson, Suzanne Brown, Clinton Holland, and Frank Destadio.

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Announcements, Awards, Special Recognition

A. Georgia Cities Week Proclamation

The Mayor read a proclamation declaring that the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) had designated April 21-27 as Georgia Cities Week. She noted that City government was the government with the most impact on citizens.

Presentation

A. Police Department CALEA presentation

Police Chief Janet Moon presented the results of the Police Department's review by the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). She gave a little background on CALEA and why this voluntary accreditation process was important to the department and its mission of delivering professional public safety services, noting that she currently served as a CALEA Commissioner on a national level. Peachtree City's was an Advanced Law Enforcement Accreditation department, which Moon explained meant they subscribed to 461 standards set by CALEA, as opposed to Tier One Accreditation, which had 180 standards.

Peachtree City Police Department had been accredited since 1992, and this was its 10th Meritorious Accreditation Award under the Gold Standard Assessment. Moon noted the immensity of this achievement, saying it was a testament to the men and women in the organization who had been doing this for so long. Of the 18,000 agencies in the United States, just 789 were accredited with CALEA. Only 29 of the 650 agencies in Georgia were accredited, Moon added. The benefit to citizens, she stated, was that the constant review required for accreditation enabled the Police Department to pick up on trends, patterns, or problems while they were small.

Lt. Kay Crider served as the Department's accreditation manager, in charge of keeping the process on track, and Moon presented her with a certificate of appreciation. As a CALEA Commissioner, Moon then presented the Department with its official certificate of advanced accreditation.

B. Peachtree City Fire Rescue ISO Class 1 Presentation

Fire Chief Clint Murphy reported that the Peachtree City Fire-Rescue Department had received a Class 1 rating from the Insurance Services Office (ISO). He read the department's mission statement, which said they were committed to providing quality emergency services through community education, prevention, and effective emergency response. Only 1% of the fire departments in the U.S. achieved the Class 1 ranking. The class was based on the Public Protection Classification standards. Emergency communication made up 10% of the ranking, while water supply accounted for 40%. That meant 50% was left up to the Fire Department.

However, there were also divergence points, which were penalty points, to consider. If water supply and communications ranked higher than the department's performance, penalty points were deducted for not moving together at the same rate. A department's rating was based on 100-point scale with five bonus points. Peachtree City's scores for emergency communications and water supply went up from the 2016 assessment, but the Fire Department went down by five points, which meant they were assessed three penalty points. Murphy said he would explain why and what they had already done to correct this. He again emphasized Peachtree City was still an ISO Class 1; nothing was lost during this process.

There were three main areas where they did not get as many points as possible, Murphy related. One was for ladder service, which looked at how ladder trucks were distributed throughout the city. Another was in the deployment analysis, which dealt with the location of fire stations. Personnel was the third area of deficiency.

Murphy presented a map showing Peachtree City's fire stations and the 2.5-mile areas they covered under ISO. Station 81 had the sole ladder truck. ISO's requirement was that they have three ladder trucks, and an assessment done by a company that was helping with the purchase and location of a new aerial truck agreed with that. He indicated where these trucks should be located but acknowledged the expense. A new aerial for the southside station had been ordered, and they intended to move the existing one to the north side. That would provide the most coverage based on data from the assessment and gain points on the next ISO evaluation.

Another map showed the deployment of Peachtree City's four existing fire stations, and the areas within a 1.5-mile distance, rather than 2.5 miles. Ideally, there would be six stations, with new stations in the north and in the south. Voters had approved those stations in the 2023 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. Why were these new stations needed? Murphy presented photos that showed MacDuff Parkway under construction in 2016 and compared it with a photo of how it looked today. He did the same with a 2015 photo of the Cresswind area compared to the current massive development. He noted that did not include Everton or the townhome developments on MacDuff. This area was a small city within Peachtree City, and that was why they were putting a fire station there.

Murphy did the same with photos from the southside that showed the area of Mill Farms and The Gates. Where there were five horse farms in 2015, there soon would be 74 homes when Mill Farms was finished. The Gates had been completed in that timeframe. He showed how the Somerby senior community had grown and noted that emergency medical services (EMS) was called to Somerby every day.

How many people did it take to cover this? There were 17 people needed to fight a fire in a 2,000 square foot home. Murphy said they ran with 21 people on duty on average, which gave them some slack for ambulance calls.

In 2016, Murphy explained, there was a thriving volunteer program with 30 to 35 people, but now it had dwindled to one person. There were 27 or 28 part-time staff then; now it was three. They had tried and failed to hire new part-timers, so those positions had been converted to full-time. Also, people were out due to injury at all times. However, Murphy noted that hiring was easier now because the labor market was improving and also because Council had voted to increase salaries last year.

Murphy credited his staff, along with Council support, for them being able to hang on to the Class 1 rating, which required a score of 90. He pointed out the points gained in the Community Risk Reduction category, with efforts headed by Josh Teal in increasing social media activity and education. A newsletter, funded by the Peachtree City Firefighter Foundation, was sent to every residence in the city last fall.

Having a Class 1 rating meant Peachtree City homeowners paid the lowest fire insurance rates. Peachtree City was one of just 503 ISO Class 1 departments in the United States; there were just 24 in the state. Murphy thanked Council, staff, and the community for helping them maintain this rating and presented each Council member and the City Managers with one of the shields that went on the firefighters' helmets.

Destadio asked when the next assessment was? Murphy said typically it was every four or five years, although COVID delayed the assessment this time by a couple of years.

Public Comment

Steve Brown said four of the current Council members ran as fiscal conservatives; however, they were raising taxes and restricting free speech and public participation. He asked what citizens should expect from the budget that was being prepared now, commenting that voters had approved the SPLOST, but then learned it did not include a needed \$10 million of maintenance items. He also mentioned that the citizen recreation commission was being disbanded and said he felt citizens had no input in the recreation master plan that was being developed. He urged Council to listen to citizens.

Sue Reed said she oversaw the Fayette-Peachtree City Pickleball Club training program. Tyrone had allowed the club to use their facilities for free beginning training sessions, and she was asking Peachtree City to allow them to use four courts at Kedron Fieldhouse for two hours each week. The club would provide certified instructors and equipment. Pickleball Club President Loyd Smith echoed Reed's call for training sites, saying there was a need and a desire. He was aware new pickleball courts would be built in the future, but the city could provide courts for training now. The club would be willing to work with the Recreation Department on this, Smith added.

Joe Campbell said he served on the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and wanted to commend the CVB staff for the job they did on the recent Hops & Props event and for their work in bringing the city together through such events. He said he was looking forward to more community activities in the future.

Rebecca Thomas thanked Council for having a morning meeting and for listening to comments about Picnic Park. She said she hoped a free public splash pad could be installed on the site of the former All Children's Playground. The current splash pad was small and charged a user fee. Fayetteville and Newnan's splash pads were free to all users.

Caroline Bena also asked Council to remove the user fees at the splash pad. She had heard that user fees deterred people from other cities for using the splash pad, but she felt it deterred some residents from using it as well. Like Thomas, Bena said she, too, drove to Fayetteville and Newnan to use their splash pads and would welcome people from other cities coming to Peachtree City to use theirs. Maybe they would stay around to buy lunch or gasoline from a local business.

Jason Pohl talked about the new agenda process adopted by Council at its previous meeting. Pohl remarked that Council members Brown and Holland, and also citizen Steve Brown, had objected, saying this violated First Amendment rights. Pohl rebutted that no one's First Amendment rights had been violated, citing the fact that he was standing in front of them and speaking at that moment. He said the Mayor had responded to every email he had ever sent her. He was allowed to comment at public hearings. If someone had a good idea, two other Council members should support it. He also added that they were a representative democracy, not a direct democracy.

Blake Hayes thanked the Police Department for enforcing the school zone on Robinson Road. He asked Council to consider some things to help the Police. Robinson Road was zoned for 40 mph except in the school zones. To drop the speed limit to 25 for the school zone, State law said a warning sign advising of a school zone ahead had to be posted in advance, but there was not enough distance from the intersection with SR 54 and Robinson Road to post a sign. That meant the school zone started at the intersection of Robinson and Speer and ended at the Methodist church before the turnoff to the school. This could be eliminated if Council reduced the speed limit on this portion of Robinson to 35 mph, which would eliminate the need for the warning sign since the speed limit was being reduced by just 10 mph. Hayes also asked Council to

consider signs with flashing yellow lights to advise drivers of a school zone.

Agenda Changes

Destadio moved to pull item D out of the Consent Agenda and put it as a New Agenda item. Holland seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

A. April 4, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Holland moved to approve the April 4, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

Holland moved to approve Consent Agenda items A, B, C, E, and F. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

A. FY2024 Budget Amendment- Sunset Sounds Sponsorship

APPROVED 5-0

B. FY2024 Budget Amendment and Intent to Finance - Police Vehicles

APPROVED 5-0

C. Consider Path Easement from Peachtree City United Methodist Church

APPROVED 5-0

D. Reclassifications & Position Title Changes for Human Resources, CVB and Finance

Moved to New Agenda Item

E. Consider ADA Transition Plan Submittal to GDOT

APPROVED 5-0

F. Integrity Fusion Stormwater Facility Maintenance Agreement

APPROVED 5-0

Old Agenda Items

None

New Agenda Items

A. CA - D (From Consent Agenda) Reclassifications & Position Title Changes for Human Resources, CVB and Finance

Destadio asked Interim City Manager Justin Strickland to recap the costs.

Strickland said the Human Resources position would be a 10% increase, coming to \$3,921.90 for the rest of this year and \$8,157.55 for the next fiscal year. The CVB position, which would be paid out of the CVB fund, would see a 5% position increase, which equaled \$1,351 for this year and \$2,810.08 for the full fiscal year. The Finance position was also a 5% increase, coming to \$1,785.14 for the balance of the year and \$3,714.34 for the full fiscal year. A budget amendment was not required, Strickland noted, saying all the costs were covered because of vacant

positions.

Destadio moved to approve as read. Holland seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearings

None

Council/Staff Topics

A. GDOT Town Hall commendation

Learnard commended staff for coordinating what she deemed an “amazing” town hall on April 16 with City Engineers and the Georgia Department of Transportation. More than 200 people registered to attend.

B. Reminder about the upcoming morning meetings

Learnard said there would be morning Council meetings again on May 16 and June 20, and she hoped to see good attendance.

C. Celebration of Service for Robert Curnow

This was City Manager Robert Curnow’s final meeting, Learnard remarked, noting that when Curnow arrived in 2023, he brought 30 years of municipal government experience in a broad range of areas, including information technology and cybersecurity. She recalled that his first task was leading Council in a re-review of a comprehensive pay and benefits study that had not been fully implemented. The implementation of this study had bolstered staffing in every department, Learnard continued.

By summer, he had scrubbed each department’s budget, met with City leaders, and uncovered \$10 million of previously unidentified and deferred maintenance items. Learnard said he had the leadership and courage to bring this to their attention so they could start fixing what needed to be fixed. One of the first things they did when Curnow arrived was to purchase Zencity, which staff now used on a regular basis to poll citizens and get their feedback. Finally, she said, Curnow had built a cohesive staff and Council team and inspired them to work together on the vision of “uncompromised excellence.” Learnard told Curnow he was an amazing leader, mentor, and friend, and all they could say was “thank you.”

Destadio thanked Curnow for being a good friend and mentor and had led them through some tough times with a bit of levity.

Holland commended Curnow for working with five strong personalities on Council last year. He noted that Curnow showed him how to be a productive Councilman and had become a good friend. However, he was sure the team left behind would keep them in good hands.

Brown said she regretted no longer being able to tap into Curnow’s experience and

knowledge. She, too, said two fine people would be stepping into the void Curnow was leaving.

Johnson noted she had been on Council just three and a half months, so the first changes she noted when Curnow arrived were as a citizen, and she said they were obvious, mentioning the upswing in social media, newsletters, and other outreach to citizens. She commented on the Peachtree City 101 classes he had been conducting so residents could gain a better understanding of how government worked. Johnson said she had never heard a negative comment about Bob Curnow.

Curnow responded that he was honored and humbled to have had this opportunity to work with the talented women and men of Peachtree City, and he knew they would be in good hands going forward. He thanked staff for their support and said he would miss everyone.

Learnard said a reception in Curnow's honor would follow the meeting.

D. Need for discussion on administrative variance ordinances 1203 and 1204

Holland said he wanted to discuss Ordinances 1203 and 1204; those dealt with administrative zoning variances. Ordinance 1203 decided what type of variance was needed, and 1204 went into the details. Holland was requesting this be placed on a future Council agenda so they could discuss it further.

The administrative variance, he continued, allowed things that were not in the best interest of land planning and zoning. He noted that rear setbacks could be changed if it did not exceed 50% of the requirement, parking spaces could be decreased by 25%, and fence heights could be increased by 24% under an administrative variance. This was all done by a three-member committee consisting of the Zoning Administrator, City Manager, and one Council member. Variances should be done only on the dais, Holland asserted.

The administrative variance was adopted in December 2021, and Holland showed the number of all variances over the past four years. The number that came before Council remained steady at about 10 to 14 a year. There had only been three administrative variances granted before the ordinances were adopted in 2021, but there were nine in both 2022 and 2023, and three already in 2024, he reported.

Peachtree City had been well-served by detailed zoning and land use plans for decades, Holland remarked. He said the cause of the large increase in the numbers of administrative variances should be investigated by Council. He then made a motion that Administrative Variance Ordinances 1203 and 1204 be added as an agenda item at the next City Council meeting, May 2, 2024.

City Attorney Ted Meeker told him there was no need for a motion; he just needed

two other Council members to agree. Holland rescinded his motion and asked for a consensus to put this on the May 2 agenda for discussion.

The issue, Learnard commented, was did they think it was worth spending staff time on this? She said Holland had presented some good information, and she would like to sit down with him and discuss this before they gave staff direction to work on it.

That would be fine, Holland replied, but the issue now was putting this topic on the next meeting's agenda. Learnard said she saw the issue as being if they wanted to direct staff to spend time getting data on this. Holland again stated he was looking for two people to join him and put it on the May 2 agenda. A little staff time would be needed, but there would be discussions among the five Council members before that meeting, he commented.

Brown said she was in total agreement that this should be on the next agenda. Johnson asked if Holland wanted them to vote on a solution at the next meeting or just have a discussion?

Holland stated he wanted it on the agenda for investigation and discussion. They might not make a decision at that meeting or decide a workshop was needed. He just felt this needed to be discussed on the dais.

If this was something Council wanted to pursue and vote on at the next meeting, Meeker said, they would be initiating a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, which then would go to the Planning Commission for a public hearing. That could be the action taken at the next meeting, but, as he understood it, Holland was asking only for a discussion. Holland agreed, saying he was trying to follow the new rules Council had adopted.

Destadio explained that nothing could be voted on until it went to the Planning Commission. Holland had brought up some good information, but there would be a cost for the staff time to make these changes. Everything had a cost, and they needed all the information to make a smart decision.

Holland said this information on the number of variances was easily determined, although he agreed that the cost of implementing changes would have to be looked into by staff, but he said that should take very little staff time.

One of the points of the changes they made at the last meeting was that they would have the opportunity to talk to one another, the Mayor commented. This would allow for investigation and to figure out what they wanted to do. She said she would like to see this on Council/Staff Topics at the May 2 meeting because they would know by then what was not working under the current ordinance.

Brown stated that under the new rules they could bring something forward during

Council/Staff Topics and determine if it would be put on an agenda. The idea was not to have discussions behind the scenes before it was brought to the public dais.

She then read a statement:

"2024 04 18 Administrative Variance Comment to Council

I believe the Administrative Variance Ordinance Sections 1203 and 1204 need to be revised, or possibly rescinded completely.

I've wanted the revision since last summer when this issue was addressed by Councilman Holland.

I have several issues with the current ordinance as written:

It establishes a "fast-track" application for a homeowner to apply for:

- a- approval for a zoning violation built by a former owner,
- b- up to a 50% reduction of the rear setback on their property. That fact alone is the equivalent of negating the mandatory compliance with the rear setback for 13,000 residential units, and properties in the city.
- c- a decrease of up to 25% of a setback (front, side or rear) if the property adjoins a publicly-owned property and there is no other location for a proposed building expansion
- d- a decrease of up to 25% in the minimum number of parking spaces required by the parking ordinance
- e- an increase in the maximum height of a fence or wall with certain conditions.

Unfortunately, as it is written, Section 1204 allows for a three person committee to approve far too much.

I also object to any requirement that an applicant, must obtain letters of approval from their neighbors.

It's unfair to either require or allow a neighbor to have the power to either help approve or help deny a variance. I believe City Council should retain that responsibility.

Additionally, I attended an administrative variance meeting yesterday for a property I felt fell into category "c" because it adjoins a city-owned green belt. That would maximize the setback reduction to just 25%.

The planning Director interpreted the ordinance differently and justified that as written the ordinance used the word "or" in such a way that the applicant was permitted to apply under section "a" which allowed a 50% reduction in the rear setback.

I disagreed, but was out-voted by the Planning Director and the City Manager.

The lack of clarity in the ordinance is a problem.

The inability for us to agree on the classification of the application indicates a fundamental issue with the ordinance itself.

Furthermore, when it was modified in December 2021, there was a claim that the number of variance public hearings would be reduced as some applicants would qualify for an administrative variance instead.

The statistics showing the number of "variances by council" prior to the ordinance in 2020 and 2021 were 10 and 14, respectively. And after the ordinance was changed, we saw 11 and 13 in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Those numbers show no reduction at all. There were 24 in the 2 years prior and 24 in the 2 years after the ordinance was changed.

The number of "Administrative Variances" was 3 in the 2 years prior, versus 18 in the 2 years after the ordinance was changed.

That is a significant increase in fact it's 6 times as many!

The prediction that the last ordinance change would save staff time, was wrong.

The last changes to this ordinance in December 2021 were a vast over-reach that is far too liberal in granting latitude away from compliance with our zoning setbacks, fence height and parking spaces required.

Additionally, the drawings in the application I reviewed yesterday had other inconsistencies between the plat drawing and the narrative they submitted. It claimed only the deck stairs would infringe into the setback, but showed a major section of the proposed new deck extending into the setback. It didn't clearly indicate exactly what would be built into the setback, or how far.

In contrast, I believe that having a full Public Hearing with our elected officials acting in their "quasi-judicial" capacity when holding the hearing allows them to ask specific questions that cannot be asked the way the current process is done.

From a legal standpoint, I question the advisability of the Director of Planning and Development being part of the approval process after they have had numerous conversations with applicants, guiding them through the application process. How does that comply with the quasi-judicial hearing requirement for a variance?

For all the reasons I outlined, the ordinance truly needs to be revised or rescinded."

Holland then said he was following the new policy that had been established at the last Council meeting. It said a Council member could bring an item forward for a consensus to get it on an agenda. They could find out the cost, so he was asking for a consensus to get it on the agenda, saying they could use this as an example of what it would take to follow through on a small change like this. He understood it would have to go to the Planning Commission, but right now he was following the rules and asking it be placed on the agenda.

Johnson said the ordinance did not require that a requested item be on the next agenda. Was there a recommended amount of time? Strickland said the question from staff was what did they want changed? Staff would do whatever Council directed them to do but needed to know what text changes they wanted.

Holland said he had submitted his suggestions for text changes to staff and Council a few weeks previously. Others might have other ideas, and that was why they needed to discuss this so they could determine if it had to go to the Planning Commission or come back to Council.

Any zoning ordinance change had to go through the Planning Commission, Destadio pointed out. Meeker said if this did appear on the agenda, the vote would be to initiate a text amendment, and that would start the process.

Brown said they needed the proposed changes submitted in the correct format as an agenda item.

Learnard asked Meeker to repeat his statement. He said if a majority of Council agreed to change this, it would have to be through a vote to initiate a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. That would then be referred to Planning Commission for a public hearing, and there were notice requirements for that, then notice requirements for the public hearing with Council. They could vet the red line changes that Holland was interested in, and staff could take that as a starting point. There might be issues from Planning, Administration, or Legal, but Council could start by debating those changes or adding others. He said it wasn't overly complicated.

With that as the starting point, Strickland said, this could be on the next agenda or a future one.

Johnson noted that she was already aware of how her fellow Council members felt about this, so this did not come as a surprise. She said Holland brought forth some good information and provided a sound starting point for discussion. Learnard and Destadio agreed.

E. Resolution against becoming a sanctuary city

Brown then said she wanted to discuss passing a resolution that declared that Peachtree City was not a sanctuary city.

She read from a prepared statement:

"2024 04 18 Need for a Resolution that Peachtree City is NOT a sanctuary city

Since being elected and sworn in as a Peachtree City Councilman I have wanted to address a serious matter that potentially threatens the safety and security of every citizen in Peachtree City.

I believe we, as the governing authority in Peachtree City have a duty and obligation to our citizens to declare that we are not a "sanctuary city".

This can be done by explicitly stating our position on immigration enforcement and cooperation with federal immigration authorities.

This can be done through a resolution, ordinance, or public statement by the city's leadership. The specifics may vary depending on the city's policies and practices, but the declaration should make it clear that Peachtree City will:

- NOT limit our cooperation with federal immigration agencies, and will
- NOT prohibit local law enforcement from inquiring about or enforcing immigration laws.
- Not prevent the detention of individuals based solely on their immigration status.

"NON-Sanctuary cities" declare that they will NOT restrict their police officers from sharing information with or assisting federal immigration authorities.

I think the Peachtree City Council should mandate that our officers cooperate with federal authorities in all immigration related matters;

As we make our declaration on these issues, we need to clearly communicate our declaration to our citizens, as well as to all local law enforcement agencies, including Fayette County Sheriff's office, Coweta County Sheriff's office, the Fayetteville Police Department, and other federal immigration authorities.

In doing so, we will ensure clarity and consistency in Peachtree City's approach to immigration.

We all know that Peachtree City is a planned community that has historically supported the safety and security of its' citizens, embraced a commitment to education and good schools, and fostered a high quality of life through a commitment to maintaining greenspace.

The state of Georgia does not embrace sanctuary cities. Yet many cities do and they are suffering because of it.

On March 6, 2024, Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones clearly stated the need for

HB301 to be passed by both the Georgia House and Senate to bolster enforcement of Georgia's existing law against sanctuary cities by rescinding sovereign immunity and immediately cease state funding for local governments that engage sanctuary policies.

Our Lieutenant Governor made that statement following the tragic murder of Laken Riley in Athens in February.

Lt. Governor Jones pointed out the Athens-Clarke County on March 6, 2024 when he said, "Athens-Clarke County local officials failed to protect the greatest asset that their county has: the students at the University of Georgia. Instead, they favored a radical agenda that puts the interests of illegal immigrants ahead of the citizens of Athens Clarke County. They, along with Joe Biden and Washington Democrats who have fought to open our borders to an invasion from illegal immigrants, are responsible for every action by every illegal immigrant they've allowed to live freely in our communities. As part of our ongoing commitment to protect Georgians, we are taking a stand against those who attempt to implement sanctuary policies that violate the law and harbor criminals."

Sadly, HB 301 did not clear the house and senate prior to the end of our legislative session. That means that we need to protect our citizens.

I believe that everyone currently sitting on the Peachtree City Council supports the safety and security of our citizens.

If Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) bring illegal immigrants to Peachtree City, it potentially endangers every citizen.

As someone whose mother was brutally murdered in 1977, I can tell you that the belief that it will never happen to you or your family, disappears in an instant. And like Laken Riley's family, I've had to live with the heartache and tragedy for the rest of my life.

-The hotels in Peachtree City are close to housing, senior living, and public schools.

-We do not have "public transportation".

-Illegal immigrant "squatters" are destroying Atlanta.

-Supporting illegal immigrants is bankrupting many cities across America.

-Not one dollar of our city budget should be spent to support illegal immigrants.

-We have a legal obligation to protect our citizens.

-That can be achieved by taking decisive action now.

I support legal immigration. I do not support illegal immigration. With over 10 million illegal immigrants entering the US in the last three years, we need to protect ourselves.

Peachtree City needs to declare that:

- we will NOT LIMIT our cooperation with federal immigration agencies
- we will NOT PROHIBIT our police department from inquiring about or enforcing immigration laws, and
- we must make it completely clear to every member of the Peachtree City Police department that they MUST enforce this policy to protect our citizens.
- we will Not prevent the detention of individuals based solely on their immigration status.
- we will support all federal immigration laws.

We need to declare that Peachtree City is NOT a sanctuary city.

I think we need to call an Special Session so that this issue can be discussed and approved by Peachtree City as an agenda item.

And, we need to do this now !

Truth be told, Peachtree City needed to do this three years ago. The threat to our citizens and our security is real.

Our citizens rely on us to protect them. We need to act.

To that end, I hereby make a motion that we place this issue on our next agenda and pass a Resolution to declare that Peachtree City is NOT a sanctuary city."

Learnard then said it was her understanding that Peachtree City was not now a sanctuary city. Johnson remarked that she and Holland had just attended a municipal law class, and she believed it was discussed there that every city had to declare annually that they were not a sanctuary city. Meeker replied that they were not allowed to be a sanctuary city.

Johnson asked how the city responded in a situation regarding sanctuary, and Meeker deferred to the Police Chief, but noted that Fayette County housed inmates and followed all Federal requirements when it came to immigration issues. Some cities directed staff to not be as strident in their enforcement, but he had never heard of that here.

Meeker asked Moon if there was a certification they had to sign each year, and she said she was not aware of anything. Destadio then reported a rumor he had heard that criminals got out of jail shortly after arrest in other areas but were held in Fayette County.

Moon agreed, saying if someone was arrested in Atlanta, they might be out of jail before the officer had completed the paperwork, but that was not the case here. Peachtree City had the reputation of being tough on crime. Meeker noted that the

jail was pretty stringent about letting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) know if there was an immigration violation. Moon said the Fayette Sheriff's Department was not a 287(g), which had an ICE component and deputies trained in that, but it did cooperate with Federal authorities.

Destadio said if they had all the right paperwork, he did not see that there was a problem now.

Moon mentioned that if they had an encounter with someone on the street and discovered that person was in the country illegally, the Police Department had no mechanism to take them into custody if they were not accused of a crime. If they were arrested, there was a mechanism for screening their immigration status, but Peachtree City Police could not just walk up to someone on the street and demand to see their green card. She said it was not uncommon for them to deal with people here illegally who were victims of crimes, and they were handled like any other citizen who was a victim because the Police were there to provide service to all.

Destadio said he believed they all agreed with what Brown said but needed a way to do it properly.

Brown said the other component was that, as a city, they should not spend city funds to support illegal immigrants. That factored into the deterioration of a lot of other cities that were spending funds to house illegal immigrants, she remarked, because they were having to cut their Police Departments and other areas of their budget. She thought the best way to prevent that was to come out with a resolution saying they were not a sanctuary city and would not spend money to support illegal immigrants.

As the people who approved the budget, Destadio pointed out, this Council would not approve any expenditures for that. Brown said things had a way of sneaking up on you.

Once you took a person into custody, Moon remarked, you were responsible for housing and feeding them. It could be a drain on those budgets. Meeker said she was talking about an inmate charge, not expenses to house immigrants not in custody.

Would it do them harm as a city to pass a resolution saying they were not a sanctuary city? Holland asked. Moon said it was a public policy decision they had to make as a Council. Holland noted that resolutions could be undone by another Council. It would be a resolution saying the city would continue following the law, Meeker remarked, and there would be no consequences from that.

Holland stated he would support putting the resolution on an agenda, and Brown said she would be happy to write it.

Johnson noted this was the first time this topic had been brought up, and she needed to know more. One thing she had learned since coming on Council was that something could sound like a really good idea but have unintended consequences. She said she needed time to educate herself. She had asked if other cities had done this, and Brown did not know of any. Johnson said she would not be comfortable making a decision at this time.

Destadio said he would quote Holland from a previous debate: "Was this a solution looking for a problem?" He wanted to see if there was a problem first. Johnson asked Moon if there was problem? Moon said they followed the laws and so did the Sheriff's Department; they had not seen a problem in their jurisdiction.

Based on the ordinance change approved at the last Council meeting, Brown commented that it was allowed to bring something up during Council/Staff Topics and ask that it be added to an agenda. If Johnson wanted more information, she could do her research before the next meeting. Johnson agreed that putting it on the next agenda for discussion did not mean they would have to vote. She could support that and would do her research before then. Johnson said Brown seemed to have some urgency about this, and she was not sure why, but was okay with continuing the discussion at the next meeting.

Strickland asked if the resolution would be on the next agenda? Brown said there would be a discussion, but she might write a rough draft of a resolution.

Holland said he hoped they would track these two examples to see how much staff time and cost was involved. That would help them understand the cost in the future. It might take a lot of time or they might be able to get it done in a day, he commented. Strickland said they could do that, but the interpretation would be subjective.

The Mayor asked if there were other Council/Staff topics, and Brown asked if they wanted to discuss the splash pad? Learnard noted they were planning another retreat for re-prioritization this summer, so it could be discussed then.

Executive Session

Holland moved to adjourn to Executive Session at 11:15 a.m. for discussion of pending or threatened litigation. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Holland moved to reconvene in regular session at 11:43 a.m. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

There being no further business, Holland moved to adjourn the meeting. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
The Meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.


Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary

Kim Learnard, Mayor