

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 15, 2024
9:30 AM

Call to Order

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met in regular session on Thursday, August 15, 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. Councilman Holland left to go to a training class after the vote to appoint the new City Manager.

Holland moved to shift Consent Agenda item A to the front of the meeting. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Brown moved to place Consent Agenda item B under Old Business on the agenda. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Holland moved to approve Consent Agenda item A, appointment of Justin Strickland as City Manager. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Announcements, Awards, Special Recognition

None

Presentation

A. Safer Streets for All - Federal Grant

City Engineer Dave Borkowski introduced Richard Fangmann of Pond & Co. for an update about the Safer Streets and Roads for All action plan for Fayette County and its municipalities. He said Paola Kimbell was the project manager on the Fayette County side. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), the Federal Highway Administration, and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) were also involved.

As they looked for ways to provide safer transportation systems, Fangmann said data was important, but they also needed community input. The paths and trails networks were being considered in addition to roads. He listed the core elements of the Safe Systems approach: safe road users, safe vehicles, post-crash care, and safe speeds, then went over what they would do to implement this approach.

Fangmann went over the timeline, pointing out that the first public meeting would be August 27 in Fayetteville, with several pop-up events planned throughout the county in August and September. The study would wrap up around the end of the year, with the final plan presentation in February. He went over the preliminary data that had been gathered, showing a county map that indicated areas that had the

highest concentration of crashes. He said more data would be forthcoming in about a month.

Learnard asked about the federal grant that was funding this, and Fangmann said it was a direct award grant to Fayette County.

B. 2024 Community Survey

Interim Assistant City Manager Yasmin Julio said the City conducted a survey of residents every year, and in 2023 began to utilize Zencity for this. This year's survey ran from May through July, and Zencity's Lee Feldman joined the meeting virtually to review some of the results. This year there was a sample size of 1,236 residents, which Feldman said was large for a community Peachtree City's size. He noted the demographics of the sample were consistent with the city's demographics.

The survey showed that 91% of the respondents were satisfied with life in Peachtree City, adding that this was the only city he had seen that had zero negative responses for two consecutive years. He went on to more specific questions, which had generally positive responses, and Feldman noted that the question about waste and recycling services saw a big jump in favorability. The widest variance dealt with the ability of citizens to give input to government and the availability of jobs that paid a living wage. Residents were very happy with the overall safety of Peachtree City.

Feldman showed that Peachtree City scored highest in all categories, when compared to several other Georgia cities. He indicated they should be especially proud of the high marks regarding ease of getting around by public transportation, attributing that to the path system. Free text responses showed that the cart paths were what people loved, and that traffic was what they wanted changed.

The survey also included some rotating questions. One asked if respondents would support a city-wide mandatory trash and curbside recycling program, and 58% said they would. Learnard said she found that very interesting.

Another question asked what respondents considered a living wage in Peachtree City, and 73% said between \$40,000 and \$124,999, and 28% said between \$75,000 and \$99,999. The survey showed that 56% considered affordable housing costs to be between \$750 and \$1,499 a month, while 22% pegged it as between \$1,000 and \$1,250.

The majority of respondents felt that the City could improve transparency and increase citizen input by setting up an online platform for submitting feedback and suggestions. Others felt it could be improved through regular surveys.

Destadio said he was glad to see people were leaning towards a trash pickup program, which had been a years-long issue.

Brown asked how they determined the bracket for the income levels, and Feldman said they used the breakdown that the Federal Census used. If Peachtree City wanted to do a survey on affordability issues, they could come up with a number that was more fine-tuned. Brown said she asked because they used \$50,000 as the average wage they were striving for when trying to attract industry. Was that enough? Feldman suggested using percentages of the average median income.

How did they get the information from the other cities? Johnson asked. Zencity conducted a national poll twice a year, Feldman replied. Johnson said this was great information.

Learnard noted the high number of respondents and that it was statistically accurate. She said she would leave it up to Strickland and staff to determine if a plan of action was needed.

Public Comment

Dan Bell told Council he and many residents were concerned about the deer population and the dangers the deer posed on the roadways. He asked Council to look at this, gather data, and explore solutions. In addition to posing a danger to motorists, deer were spreaders of tick-borne diseases.

Ralph Hail wanted to talk about short-term rentals (STRs) and asked Council to adopt an ordinance to regulate them, as had been discussed for many months. He said he was against STRs, but if they were going to exist, they needed to be regulated and licensed like any business.

Keith Larson noted that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was due to be delivered to Council next month for approval, and he said a citizen advisory board, although called for, was never formed. The only public input was a single survey, and several local groups, such as the Southside Cycle Club, the Peachtree Running Club, and the Triathlon Club, were not consulted until the City Manager stepped in at Larson's request. Larson suggested the City Manager share the plan with the public for two weeks prior to its presentation to Council.

Agenda Changes

Motion made to move Consent item A to the beginning of the meeting.

APPROVED 5-0

Motion made to move Consent item B to Old Agenda items.

APPROVED 5-0

Minutes

Johnson moved to approve the July 30 and 31, 2024, City Council retreat minutes, the August 1, 2024, City Council meeting minutes, and the August 1, 2024, executive session minutes. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

A. July 30 and 31, 2024 City Council Retreat Minutes

APPROVED 4-0

B. August 1, 2024 City Council Meeting Minutes
APPROVED 4-0

C. August 1, 2024 Executive Session Minutes
APPROVED 4-0

Consent Agenda

A. Appoint Justin Strickland as City Manager
APPROVED 5-0

B. Crosstown and Peachtree Parkway Roundabout 100% Design Proposal
Motion to approve in the amount of \$51,250.
APPROVED 3-1(Brown)

Old Agenda Items

At a previous meeting, the 60% design was approved by Council, and Borkowski was now seeking authorization to proceed to the 100% design at a cost of \$51,250.

Brown said some Council members had received an email that morning from former Council Member Mike King, and she would like to discuss some of the issues he had brought up. Learnard asked at what time she received the email, and Brown replied at 8:22 a.m.

Strickland said Borkowski had been given King's questions and could respond. The first regarded reaction from the neighbors, and Borkowski said they had met with the Brookfield homeowners association (HOA) many months ago. The HOA was concerned about the greenbelt on the northeast corner of the intersection. The design showed about 50 feet of the greenbelt being left undisturbed, and the City was willing to do a landscape plan and perhaps add a fence to help with screening and noise.

Johnson asked if the HOA thought that was sufficient, and Borkowski said it did. That was not part of the 100% design; they would have to get a separate proposal and add it before it was bid out. Strickland said they would do the civil engineering, then add the landscaping, and Borkowski said they could bring it back to Council for approval.

King also mentioned that the relocation of utilities would be extensive and asked how long homes would be without power. Borkowski said it would take at least a year just to move everything. The power, telecom, and gas companies would be notified they had to move out of the rights-of-way, and they would do it themselves, generally at no cost. Water line relocation was budgeted at \$250,000.

Destadio asked if the relocations would be done by boring or digging up the road? Borkowski said it was up to the contractors, but he was sure boring would be part of it. The shoulders, not the whole intersection, would be torn up, and power to the neighborhoods would not be shut off for any significant length of time.

The email also said that the traffic issues were only in the morning and afternoon. Borkowski said that was often the case at any intersection; how much delay was acceptable? They had been addressing this issue for more than 20 years. Strickland noted that the studies they had done showed this was a failing intersection. Traffic backed up for several hundred feet at peak hours, Borkowski remarked.

King also mentioned that private property might have to be purchased, and Borkowski said they would have to purchase right-of-way from the bank on the northwest corner and also from the retirement community on the southwest corner. This was common for transportation projects.

King asked why not construct a lane from the entrance of Mucklow's eastward to the intersection to allow the traffic to flow freely for southerly commuters. Southward traffic to the Parkway could be restricted to the left lane and the right lane restricted to turning westward. Borkowski remarked that they had looked at this intersection many times, and the recommendation from traffic engineers every time was to build a roundabout.

Destadio said he did not want them to tear everything up with no plan for putting it back together correctly. He was looking for the least impact to the residents.

Learnard said there were several recommendations over the years indicating that this failing intersection required a roundabout. She noted that Pond & Co.'s Fangmann, who she said was the region's foremost expert on traffic safety, told them that day that roundabouts reduced congestion, improved safety, and reduced injury rates.

She went on to comment that it was an interesting approach for someone who had a concern to send one email, omitting the Mayor, one hour before the meeting was to start. Council was accessible and could have had these conversations at the appropriate time, she remarked.

The Mayor recalled that Borkowski and then-Interim City Manager Bernie McMullen had been more than satisfied with the conversations they had with the Brookfield HOA. Any kind of improvement would cause disruption, but they needed to keep in mind that the end game was increased traffic safety and throughput. The County had just built a roundabout a little to the south at Peachtree Parkway and Redwine Road.

Learnard said one thing she always bragged about was that this Council tackled long-standing issues. This intersection project had been in the books for more than 20 years; there was \$1.5 million from the 2004 SPLOST still earmarked for this. Learnard also mentioned that the last Recreation Master Plan was done in 2011, and this Council had commissioned a new one. Taking care of long-deferred maintenance at City facilities was another issue this Council had tackled. The roundabout was one more thing on a list that had been deferred for decades that needed to be done for the benefit of the City, and she said they would do everything possible to minimize disruption to citizens, but it was time to fix this problem.

Destadio said he had found people did not know how to drive through roundabouts, and he hoped there would be adequate direction. He thought they needed to look at this intersection, and they had the money to do it. He said he did not get the email, either, but King asked good questions and he was satisfied with Borkowski's answers. He told Borkowski he wanted to see the design with the final landscaping plan included. Strickland said they could provide that before they put the bid out.

Brown stated that she did not think answering questions from citizens was a problem and said she wondered if the cost justified doing this. Many people had expressed concerns about what was next because they feared creating a traffic circle here meant they would be opening up TDK Boulevard. She said she had addressed that, but people were fearful.

Strickland said when they got 100% on civil, they could meet with the HOA and get them to sign off on the design of the buffer. Destadio said that was reasonable.

Johnson said she was glad to hear from the Pond and Zencity people. The maps Fangmann presented showed fewer accidents at roundabouts. This was a failing intersection. The word cloud that Zencity shared showed that citizens valued safety and wanted traffic fixed. The roundabout would be a solution. She noted that it hurt to grow sometimes, but the sacrifices would be short-lived, and this would benefit the city in the long-term.

Johnson moved to approve Old Agenda item, Crosstown and Peachtree Parkway Roundabout 100% Design Proposal with funding from the 2017 SPLOST in the amount of \$51,250. Destadio seconded and said they should add the approval of the landscaping to the final proposal. Motion carried 3-1, with Destadio, Johnson, and Learnard voting in favor, Brown in opposition.

New Agenda Items

A. 08-24-05 Ordinance #1223 Council meeting time amendment

At its July 30 and 31 retreat, Council discussed eliminating the 2x2 sessions and incorporating work sessions, which were allowed under Georgia's Open Meetings Act as long as a quorum was present and information was posted as required. Council requested these work sessions be held as the first meeting of every month at 9:30 a.m. The second meeting of the month would be at 6:30 p.m. and would be the regularly scheduled Council meeting. Council had wanted to implement this in September, but due to advertising requirements for public hearings, the effective date would have to be October 1, Julio reported.

Brown moved to approve Ordinance 1223 to amend City Ordinance Sec. 2-32, Time and Place of Meeting. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

B. 08-24-06 Ordinance #1224 Public Participation amendment

This was another topic that came up in the retreat. Julio noted that the Zencity survey showed an inability to share information with government was a topic of

concern to citizens, and this was a way to allow them more of a voice. It was also a step in the process of moving policies into ordinances. Julio said Council would be amending the current ordinance to allow citizens to speak about items on that meeting's agenda.

Brown questioned if the speaker should be required to give their address, noting that some people had rather that not be announced in public. She suggested that speakers just state their neighborhood. The other Council members said they would be fine with that.

Brown moved to approve with the recommended amendment. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

C. 08-24-07 FY2025 Convention and Visitors Bureau Budget

Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Executive Director Tyler Runyon said the CVB Board of Directors had unanimously approved the fiscal year 2025 budget of \$1,004,586. He pointed out that the new budget contained a line item for enhancements and incentives to enable his team to be more aggressive about attracting new business that would boost the hotel/motel tax. The CVB was in the midst of a rebrand and full web rebuild that should launch at the end of January.

Among the CVB's accomplishments since he took on the job five months ago, Runyon said they had brought in five baseball tournaments with the potential for seven or eight more, resulting in more room nights in local hotels and spending in the city. He said there had been a year to date increase of 5.2% in hotel nights. Runyon also mentioned community events sponsored by the CVB such as Hops and Props and Wine and Warbirds.

Brown asked again about the hotel rooms, and Runyon said there was an 8% hotel/motel tax that was divided between the City and the CVB. Residents did not pay the tax; it came from outsiders visiting the city.

Johnson thanked Runyon for examining the CVB's operations and finding ways to be better. She moved to approve the FY 2025 budget for the Peachtree City CVB. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

D. 08-24-08 FY2025 Keep Peachtree City Beautiful, Inc. Budget

Keep Peachtree City Beautiful (KPTCB) Director Al Yougel asked Council to approve an FY 2025 budget of \$176,337. It projected revenue of \$46,873 in franchise fees, assessed at \$1 per customer each quarter. Other revenues came from contracts with the City to pick up litter and maintain waste bins along the multi-use paths and at Line Creek.

He went over expenses, highlighting \$2,000 that they paid the City towards tax preparation. Contract labor and printing costs had gone up.

Yougel mentioned that since COVID, there had been a 350% increase in the amount of cardboard brought into the recycling center. He said they closed the recycling center from 5 p.m. on Saturday until Monday morning. Drop offs were not all recyclables—people left Styrofoam, furniture, and toys. Brown said they needed to find a better option.

Strickland noted they had talked about changing the fees for the waste haulers, and Yougel proposed \$1 a month. Strickland said he wanted to get several people together to talk about what that money would fund. Would the extra revenue be enough to fully staff the recycling center and have someone to check IDs? The biggest logistical hurdle to closing it was that that City vehicles had to have access in order to fuel up.

Brown moved to approve the budget as submitted. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

E. 08-24-09 Plumbing Code update

Planning and Development Director Robin Cailloux explained that Peachtree City was within the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, which had adopted a five-year strategic plan as required by State law. The first item in the plan was adoption of an update to the building plumbing code to increase water efficiency in several ways, the most obvious being reduced maximum flow in kitchen and bathroom fixtures. The City transmitted the proposed plumbing code amendments to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and it was approved.

Learnard asked if every city was doing this, and Cailloux said every one in the district, which extended to the Tennessee line. Destadio asked about the reduction in water flow for residential fixtures, and Cailloux replied that was only for new construction.

Brown made a motion to approve the proposed changes to the plumbing code. Destadio seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearings

A. 08-24-10 Variance request for rear setback encroachment, 515 Clearwater Cove

Cailloux showed the property on a zoning map, pointing out that it backed up to the Three Ponds area. A site plan included the outline of the house, and Cailloux indicated the deck that encroached into the rear setback. This house was built at a time when building permits were not required for decks. She said there had been several similar variance requests because of this in this neighborhood.

The existing deck encroached into the 20-foot rear setback by about 11 feet. The homeowners were proposing increasing the size of the deck from 12x14 to 12x19 and enclosing a portion of it to create a sunroom. She listed other properties on this street that had similar variances granted over the years. Two were for 10-foot encroachments, and one was for two feet.

The ordinance stated that there were six criteria that should be proved in order for a variance to be granted. These included special circumstances applicable to the property and that not granting the variance would result in unnecessary hardship.

The applicant was not present. Cailloux said they were informed of the hearing, and a sign was posted on the property.

The Mayor opened the public hearing. No one wished to speak in favor or in opposition to the request, and she closed the hearing.

Learnard said she did not see that this would be materially detrimental. She drove through this neighborhood and was glad to see homeowners wanting to improve their property.

Brown said the fact that the applicants did not address any of the six criteria was a problem, as was the fact that they were not present. They did not have to be present, she went on, but their application packet should contain enough information to convince Council to grant the request.

She indicated she had a detailed analysis of the six criteria and could go through it, but the point was that she did not think this should be approved because they did not meet those requirements, even though the deck had been there since 1996. The City had a right to protect its green spaces, such as Three Ponds. She said she understood it was difficult to find properties that met all of a family's needs, but she could not support this.

Destadio's sticking point was the enlargement of the deck and that it was going vertical, as well. He said he could not see going against the ordinance just because somebody wanted a sunroom.

The footprint expanding from 14 to 19 feet was not into the rear setback, so Johnson said that was not a concern of hers. Cailloux said even replacing what was there would require a variance. Cailloux explained if Council did not grant a variance, the owners would have to remove the deck. She told Council they could grant exactly what had been requested or something else, such as maintaining a deck at the existing size but not enclosing it. They also could never repair more than 50% of the deck without a variance, she said.

If Council denied this, could they come back in six months with a different request? Learnard asked, but Cailloux said they would have to remove the deck if this was

denied. If they wanted to go to court, the court date would probably be past the six-month timeframe.

If they came back, asked Johnson, would they have to start again by paying the fees and the wait time? Cailloux said they would, although Council could waive the fee; the time would be the same.

Could Council grant a variance that day to enable the homeowner to keep the existing deck? Learnard inquired, and Cailloux said yes. Brown said she would support granting a variance only to the exact footprint and current build of the existing deck.

City Attorney Ted Meeker noted that the setbacks were in place at the time of construction, so the deck had always been illegal, and the 50% rule would not apply. If Council wanted to allow them to keep and maintain the deck in its current situation, then a variance for the existing footprint would have to be approved.

Johnson said it was her understanding that the homeowner initially was looking to replace the deck, and then the project grew. She could support replacing the deck to the size it was.

Brown asked if there were side setbacks on this property? Cailloux told her that it was zoned General Residential (GR), which allowed for zero side setbacks, but required a minimum of 10 feet between building structures.

Meeker proposed a motion to approve a variance that complied with the existing footprint of the deck but nothing further. He said that included maintenance in the existing deck area. So moved, said Brown. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

B. 08-24-11 Variance request for increased parking, 705 Highway 54 W

This was a bank building in the Peachtree Corners shopping center. It was developed under the old development ordinance, and the new owners wanted to redevelop it, again as a bank, but as a smaller building.

They were planning on razing the entire site, and the ordinance said when that was done, they would have to come into compliance with the current development standards. One of those was parking ratio requirements that said a building of this size would have a minimum of 14 spaces. The ordinance set a 125% cap, and the applicant was requesting 24 spaces. Cailloux noted this was less than the 31 currently on the site.

If approved, the applicant would be required to replace tree caliper inches on the property at a double rate. This would be calculated only for the increased amount of impervious surface (the 10 extra parking spaces), which was about 1,600 square feet. The ordinance said that equaled a tree replacement of about three trees,

which when doubled was six additional trees. Right now, there was a 30-foot buffer between the parking and the State right-of-way, and they would be increasing that buffer to 60 feet to comply with current development standards. There would be plenty of space in that additional 30 feet for those six trees, Cailloux remarked.

She reminded Council of the six criteria for variances that they must consider.

Matt Brockelman represented VyStar Credit Union represented the applicant. He said they included responses to the six criteria in their application packet. He introduced Bob Corley from Sevan Multi-Site Solutions to assist with technical questions. Brockelman gave a brief overview of VyStar, saying they were a military-based credit union with nearly a million members in north Florida and Georgia.

The Mayor opened the public hearing. No one wished to speak either in favor or in opposition, and she closed the hearing.

Destadio noted that the ordinance called for caliper inches, not a specific number of trees, but Cailloux said she could take the minimum caliper inches required and convert it into the number of trees. These would just be additional trees; they still had to plant the required number of trees throughout the property. If this variance was approved, the next step would be approval of the conceptual site plan by the Planning Commission. Landscape plan approval came near the end of the construction process.

Learnard verified that the additional space from the reduced amount of parking would allow doubling of the buffer along SR 54, and Cailloux said that was correct. Learnard remarked that she had no problem with additional trees and welcoming a new business.

Brown remarked that although the bank that was there now was closed, there were a number of cars parked in the lot. Brockelman said he, too, had seen that, and the cars all seemed to be parked on the side near the Chick-fil-A. They knew their parking lot was likely to be used by patrons of surrounding businesses, and that was fine. Brown asked why so many spaces would be left adjacent to Chick-fil-A as opposed to moving them to the other side of the property? Corley said that layout allowed for better traffic flow for the drive thru.

Brown also asked if they were amenable to setting up spaces for golf cart parking? Would they be installing bicycle racks? Neither of these were required, she added.

Corley said VyStar provided bicycle parking at all its locations and would be willing to look at golf cart parking. Brockelman said they could not make a commitment, but it was a conversation they were having. Cailloux said the Planning Commission could require it during the conceptual site plan process.

Johnson noted that golf cart parking did not count towards the parking requirement. Cailloux said most developers did not want to put more parking in than they needed, but they did not have to build the maximum number and could use extra spaces for carts. These were conversations that the Planning Commission could have.

Brown asked what their business model required, and Corley said 24 spaces; there would be eight full-time employees, plus customer spaces and two ADA spaces.

Brown moved to approve the variance as submitted. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- C. 08-24-12 New Alcohol License - 9292 Korean BBQ, 220 City Circle, Suite 500**
9292 Korean BBQ in The Avenue had requested a license to sell beer, wine, and distilled spirits with Sunday sales. There would be a positive impact to the City budget this year of \$2,750 and \$5,500 going forward, Deputy City Clerk Stacey Collins reported. The applicant and location met all requirements.

The Mayor opened the public hearing. No one wished to speak in favor or in opposition. The Mayor closed the public hearing.

Brown moved to approve. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Council/Staff Topics

Upcoming Events

Learnard mentioned Night Market the next evening at Drake Field, the American Junior Golf Association Tournament going on at Planterra, and the shredding event on August 24.

Parking Requirements

Over the last few years, Cailloux told Council, they had identified a growing issue in the Zoning Ordinance with the minimum parking requirement and the 125% maximum, specifically with banks and medical offices. In businesses that were already developed, she said staff had come up with creative solutions involving unmarked, unpaved areas, but that was not sustainable or a position they would like to be in, and she said she would like to have a discussion about modifying the parking requirements just for banks and medical offices. As a Zoning Ordinance change, Cailloux explained this would have to go before both the Planning Commission and City Council for public hearings.

Recreation Master Plan

Strickland noted there would be two public town halls in September on the Recreation Master Plan. These would be opportunities for the public to review and provide feedback before the Plan was presented to Council in October. Learnard pointed out that the Plan was developed with public input on surveys and interviews.

Short-Term Rental Ordinance

He also mentioned that the Planning Commission would be talking about the short-term rental ordinance at its next meeting, and it would then be coming back to Council.

Public Communications Manager

Julio introduced new Public Communications Manager Vivian Lett.

Executive Session

Johnson moved to adjourn to executive session to discuss pending or threatened litigation at 11:58 a.m. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Destadio moved to reconvene in regular session at 12:42 p.m. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.



Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary



Kim Learnard, Mayor