

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 16, 2025
6:30 PM

Call to Order

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met in regular session on Thursday, January 16, 2025. Mayor Kim Learnard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Council members attending: Laura Johnson, Suzanne Brown, and Frank Destadio. Council Member Clinton Holland was out due to a family emergency.

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

State of the City Address

The Mayor presented her annual State of the City address, saying 2024 was a year of progress, but also a time to reflect on how far the City had come during its 65-year history. She noted that Peachtree City had managed its revenues well, with more than \$30 million in its reserve fund. They had lowered the millage rate this year and increased the property tax exemption for more lower income seniors. She said Peachtree City supported opting in on House Bill 581, which capped property assessments for homesteaders, but she did not support a proposed new sales tax, commenting that government should reduce spending to compensate for the lessened revenue.

Traffic was a perennial issue, and the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) project to improve traffic flow at the SR 54/74 intersection was expected to be complete in 2026. Other projects in the works included a roundabout at Crosstown Road and Peachtree Parkway, improvements along Huddleston Road, and path network expansion.

The past year was notable for the number of expansions of existing industries and the filling of some long-empty retail spaces. Peachtree City was now home to Southern Technical College and Clayton State University, which were providing a variety of training programs and college courses.

Learnard mentioned the completion of the new Recreation Master Plan, which proposed projects for the next several decades. In 2024, many existing facilities were upgraded and the City took over operation of the Tennis Center. A new Recreation Advisory Group was being formed.

Peachtree City remained one of Georgia's safest cities, with a decrease in part one crimes over the past year and an expansion of investigation into online scamming. The City purchased property that would enable them to establish a public safety training space, emergency operations, and a real-time crime center. The Fire Department was awarded ISO Class One status again.

The library celebrated its 50th year with several events, and the Planning Department saw two years of work come to fruition when Council adopted an ordinance to regulate short-term rentals. The Planning Commission was now working on a unified development ordinance. The Mayor also commended the Convention and Visitors Bureau for its work, both in increasing tourism and in planning events, such as Hops ‘n’ Props.

Citizen engagement was vital, Learnard continued, pointing to the PTC 101 program, which acquainted residents with City operations, several town halls, and also the Slice of the City meetings that had been held in each village over the past year.

She mentioned the appointment of Justin Strickland as City Manager and the hiring of Chris Hobby as Assistant City Manager. The summer internship program was a success, Learnard said, and videos from the Communications staff had garnered a number of awards.

The Mayor concluded by pointing out that Peachtree City was fortunate to still have many of its founding residents living in the community. She said the City had the leadership, facilities, and involved citizenry to enable them to continue their success for the next 65 years and beyond.

Announcements, Awards, Special Recognition

None

Public Comment

Lloyd Smith, president of the Fayette-Peachtree City Pickleball Club urged Council to adopt the recreation master plan and get to work on implementing its recommendations for a pickleball facility. He said they were having to turn down young people who wanted training because of a lack of facilities.

Sue Reed also urged them to adopt the plan because of pickleball and wondered when the projects would be implemented.

Keith Larson said Council should be aware of a 2,000-home project that would be going up in Coweta County on the western shore of Lake McIntosh and also of a project near Senoia with 800 homes. These developments were estimated to generate 50,000 new vehicle trips each day, and many of those would be to or through Peachtree City. He mentioned a GDOT proposal to widen SR 54 to handle with this.

Blake Hayes commended the Public Works Department for replacing signs and removing downed trees. He remarked that there were still issues that needed to be addressed, such as missing signs and policy decisions, including adding flashing lights in school zone areas.

Agenda Changes

Minutes

Johnson moved to approve the December 19, 2024, City Council meeting minutes, the

December 19, 2024, Executive Session minutes, and the January 2, 2025 City Council Work Session minutes.

A. December 19, 2024 City Council Meeting Minutes

APPROVED 4-0

B. December 19, 2024 Executive Session Minutes

APPROVED 4-0

C. January 2, 2025 City Council Work Session Minutes

APPROVED 4-0

Consent Agenda

Johnson moved to approve Consent agenda items A through G. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

A. FY2025 Budget Amendment - Pension Trust Interest

APPROVED 4-0

B. Recommendation for Benefits Broker

APPROVED 4-0

C. Ordinance # 1233 Transportation Advisory Group Update

APPROVED 4-0

D. Ordinance #1234 Discharging Bows Update

APPROVED 4-0

E. Resolution #01162024-CA-B Call for 2025 Municipal Election for Mayor, Post 3, and Post 4 and Setting of Qualifying Fees

APPROVED 4-0

F. Resolution #01162025-CA-C Indemnification of Public Officials

APPROVED 4-0

G. Legal Organ - Fayette County News

APPROVED 4-0

Old Agenda Items

A. 01-25-01 Recreation Master Plan Adoption

Strickland began with a timeline, showing that the request for proposal (RFP) for the plan went out in May 2023, with the contract awarded to CPL. CPL began a process of citizen surveys, community outreach, and meetings. A draft of the plan was presented to Council in October. Their feedback was incorporated, and the final draft was sent back to them in December.

While there were a number of maintenance-type things that could be done with

little expense, Council would need to prioritize larger projects, Strickland commented. The new Recreation Advisory Group would need to be involved, as would the sports associations and private partnerships.

Strickland deemed several projects “really big,” such as the remaking of Braelinn Park to include a soccer/cricket area. There was a proposal for a pickleball facility on Rockaway Road, and many recommendations for the nearby Meade Fields, including a natatorium and a nature area. At Pebblepocket, the plan recommended a splash pad, playground, and trails. Suggested improvements at Battery Way could be restrooms and a play area, along with electric charging stations for carts. The 2023 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) included funding for renovations on Kelly Drive, and the plan mentioned space for the Farmers Market, a veterans’ plaza, and a small amphitheater.

There were more than 30 projects in the plan, and many had no funding sources identified. CPL had suggested they renegotiate fees with the County, eliminate the athletic field lighting fees, and update rental and program rates. The plan also recommended continuing SPLOST funding for major capital projects. It called for the addition of some new positions in the Recreation Department. Another big recommendation was to continue to preserve green space and also to continue regular maintenance and upgrades of facilities.

Strickland stressed that this was a planning document. Everything in it might not be accomplished, and it would take many years to complete what they did decide to do. They had to deal with funding, feasibility, and the limited amount of staff time available. The biggest issue for staff was to find out what Council and the citizens wanted to see done first.

Johnson moved to adopt the Recreation Master Plan. Destadio seconded, adding they should now pay CPL for their services.

Brown said the motion should be to accept the plan and pay CPL for their contractual services. Learnard asked if she was worried CPL would not get paid? Brown said no; her objection was that the motion should say they “accepted” the plan, not “adopted” it. Was there a difference? City Attorney Ted Meeker said accepting meant they had received the package from CPL and could move forward with payment; adopting meant they were adopting what was in the plan. Brown said they were not adopting the plan, but Learnard replied that they were, and the payment terms were in the contract. It was the City Manager’s responsibility to pay CPL. She said they were adopting what was in the plan, although they knew not everything would come to fruition. She asked Brown if there was content she wanted to discuss before the vote.

Johnson said they postponed adopting this from last month, and she felt all the issues had been ironed out. Brown said she wanted to change the word “adopt” to “accept.” Destadio said he was fine with the way it was written but wanted to

ensure everyone understood they were not adopting what was proposed in the plan, just the overall plan itself.

The Mayor said Council could discuss priorities during the Council retreat in February. She called for the vote, and the motion to adopt the plan passed unanimously.

New Agenda Items

Public Hearings

A. 01-25-02 Variance Request from rear setback, 102 Flintlock Court

Senior Planner Lora Hooks showed the property at the corner of Flintlock Court and Fieldstone Lane and explained that Code Enforcement discovered a shed was being built without a permit and issued a stop-work order. When the permit application came in, she continued, it was discovered that the shed was in the rear setback, as was a deck constructed by a previous owner without a permit.

The applicant was requesting a variance from the 30-foot rear yard setback in order to encroach 12.2 feet to allow the construction of the shed. A variance for a 6.2-foot encroachment was also needed for the deck to bring the property into zoning compliance. If Council approved the variance, staff recommended that the color scheme of the shed blend with the colors of the primary structure or be earth tones.

She noted that the Ordinance required Council to consider six factors when making a decision on a variance, and all factors must be met. These said that special circumstances regarding the property that precluded other options and also that the variance must not be a detriment to surrounding properties.

Applicant David Hart provided a justification narrative, a site survey, and letters of consent from neighboring property owners. He told Council this shed would be a pool house and that he did not realize he needed a permit because he read on the City website that a permit was not required for a movable structure. However, this was over the size limit, so a permit was necessary. Hart explained that he chose the location because of water flow on the property. It could be moved to another location, but this was the best site.

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

Learnard asked if there was a problem with the pool being in the setback, and Hooks said there was not; that was permitted. Brown asked if the pool was properly fenced. Hart said it was, and the fence went around the shed.

The Mayor then asked if the owners of 100 Fieldstone Lane, which was directly behind Hart's house, would be providing a letter of consent? Hart said a house on

Longer Drive backed up to the shed. Hooks indicated the lot he was talking about and indicated which lots provided letters. Learnard asked again if there was a letter from 100 Fieldstone. Hooks said there was.

How much work had been done on the shed when the stop-work order was issued? Brown asked, and Hooks showed a photo taken that day. However, Brown said work had continued since then.

Johnson asked if it was correct that movable structures of a certain size were allowed without a permit and, if so, how much larger than that was this structure? Hooks said movable did not matter; the length of the rear property line was taken into account, and a shed of 100 square feet would be the maximum allowed without a permit. This structure was 220 square feet.

Johnson also asked about work after the stop-work order, and Hart stated they had installed doors and gutters after it was issued.

The letters of support that were presented were confusing, Learnard remarked, and she could not tell who had signed the one that was marked as 100 Fieldstone Lane. Hooks explained that Hart had written to the neighbors and asked them to sign. The owners of 100 Fieldstone Lane said they wanted to talk to a lawyer and their real estate agent, Hart said. Council then discussed if the signature on the letter was from the owner of the property.

Learnard said she felt unprepared to make a good decision and wanted to know if they had the consent of all the neighbors.

Brown said it was difficult to believe that a homeowner in Peachtree City would believe they did not need a building permit for a large shed. Granting this variance would just reinforce the idea that it was okay to build without a permit or continue after a stop-work order. She thought they should deny the application and instruct the homeowner to remove the shed.

Destadio said he, too, found it impossible to believe the homeowner did not know he needed a permit.

Johnson noted that this variance was two-fold, and they had not discussed the deck. Could they approve the deck and not the shed? Meeker said they could, and Johnson said the deck did not encroach as much as the shed and also noted it was built by a previous owner. She would be inclined to approve the deck, but not the shed.

If they did that, Learnard asked Meeker, what would be the owner's next step for the shed? Meeker said it depended on Council's action. They could approve the deck, but not the shed. Learnard said she would like to give Hart more time regarding the shed. Brown disagreed and was especially concerned about the

ambiguity of the letter from 100 Fieldstone Lane. However, she said she could vote that the deck remain since it was built by a previous owner.

Brown moved to deny the variance request for the shed and approve the request for the deck. Destadio seconded.

Johnson asked how Hart obtained the permission slip from 100 Fieldstone? He said he wrote a consent letter and took it to all the neighbors. The owners of 100 Fieldstone had questions about their property value and did not sign. Johnson asked how it was then that he had submitted a signed document from 100 Fieldstone, and Hart said he had not; he had submitted documents from other properties. Johnson said there was one signed from 100 Fieldstone Lane, but after further discussion, she concluded someone had written the wrong address on this letter.

Learnard called for the vote, and Brown's motion carried unanimously.

Council/Staff Topics

A. Upcoming Emergency Stormwater Projects

City Engineer Dave Borkowski said they had planned to address several much-needed projects through a bond after the storm water rate study was complete and would be coming to Council soon with the results of that study.

However, he continued, three of those projects had elevated to more urgent status. There was a detention pond failure at 27 Parkgate and pipe collapses at 114 Braelinn Court and 214 Southwick. He showed maps to locate these areas and photos showing the area and the condition of the pipes. On Parkgate, there was a pipe failure through the dam. At Braelinn Court, a pipe collapse had caused a sinkhole within a few feet of the foundation of a home. There was another sinkhole on Southwick.

They were working on preliminary designs and geotech studies to address this, and, because of the urgency, had decided to skip the bid process and just get quotes for the Parkgate and Braelinn projects. The Southwick project was in design. They had two quotes on Parkgate, with the lowest being \$313,140. They only received one for the Braelinn Court project, and it was \$45,624. Funding would come from the stormwater utility, which had \$600,000 budgeted each year for pipe lining and replacement. Borkowski noted they were issuing an RFP for on-call stormwater contractors, which would enable them to get someone out at short notice to assess these emergency issues.

Destadio asked how long this had been going on, and Borkowski said they began working on the design and bidding process when the problems were discovered a few months ago, but it quickly became more of a critical situation.

What did an on-call stormwater resource company do? Learnard asked. Borkowski said they would assess the problem and give them a price to do all the work. The goal was to get three on-call contractors on call, so they would have three quotes.

Meeker asked if the homes would be damaged if the dam breached, and Borkowski said they would. Meeker said this situation, and the proximity of homes to Braelinn site, would qualify these projects under the public works bidding law, but Borkowski should justify why they were not going through the normal bidding process. They were not asking to proceed with the Southwick project. This should be written up for Council to vote on during the next work session, Meeker stated.

How old were these pipes? Johnson asked. They had been in the ground since the '80s or '90s, Borkowski said. She asked if the age of the pipes determined how the replacement budget was allotted, and Borkowski said they looked at pipes in different sections of the city and decided based on condition. He told Destadio these were not suitable for pipe lining.

Meeker said the public works bidding law did not apply to expenditures under \$100,000, but Borkowski still should write it up for Council.

B. Council Member Clint Holland & Family

Brown said Holland's mother-in-law was not expected to live through the night and asked everyone for their prayers for the family.

C. Deer Thinning

Brown commented that she had been monitoring comments about deer hunting on social media and urged citizens to view the Department of Natural Resources presentation to City Council. She observed that deer ate seedlings and could impact future tree coverage. Also, there were photos of coyotes in Peachtree City on Facebook, and she noted that coyote hunting was allowed during extended archery season.

D. Cameras at entry points

Brown said she and Holland questioned the need for cameras at any other entry points into the city other than at the Crabapple gate. Could that be on a future agenda? They saw no reason for expenditures on cameras at other sites.

Learnard said the rationale was to get counts at three locations in order to have a basis for comparison. The decision to do so was unanimous, and she thought they would get some good data. Brown said she did not think data from other areas would be comparable.

Destadio asked about the cost of camera coverage. Strickland said it worked out to about \$3,330 for each camera and monitoring for one year through the Flock system that the Police Department used. The motion that was approved said there would be cameras at two locations determined by staff, and Strickland, Assistant

City Manager Chris Hobby, Assistant Police Chief Matt Myers and Lt. Brad Williams decided on the sites. One was at Maple Shade, which Strickland said was comparable to Crabapple because it was in Tyrone and was a neighborhood road. On the south side, the camera would be at The Preserve because carts had to drive on a neighborhood road to connect to the Peachtree City path. Destadio said that seemed like a wise decision.

Johnson stated she would feel more comfortable making a future decision if she had data on how many golf carts were coming in at different locations. She did not think they needed to continue this monitoring in the future, except at Crabapple, where additional development was planned. Destadio said he agreed and would rather have too much data than not enough.

E. Adding items onto the agenda

When the agenda was posted the previous week, Brown said there was a presentation listed called “Building Brains from the Beginning.” She, Destadio, and Holland agreed that it should be removed from the agenda, and the agenda was amended to remove it. Ordinance 1218 said “City staff with approval from the city manager may request to have an item placed on the agenda by filing such request in writing with the city clerk prior to noon on the Thursday preceding the council meeting. The Mayor or any Council Member may introduce an item in accordance with sec. 2-36(i), under Council and Staff Topics. Consensus must be reached in a public meeting, by the Mayor and Council, to determine if further investigation and research into the matter is warranted prior to bringing the item back for an official action at a subsequent meeting. Such items may not be placed or discussed on the agenda if council has already decided the issue within 180 days.”

Ordinance 1218 was last amended in April 2024 in a 3-2 vote with Brown and Holland voting no, Brown stated. She said she asked the City Manager to provide her with a copy of the written request from city staff to place the item on the agenda, and the response showed that Learnard requested the item by placed on the agenda. It was not mentioned in the Council/Staff Topics on January 2 or at any prior meeting as the ordinance required. Brown said it appeared there was a two-tiered system that created dissention among Council by allowing some people to bypass the Council/Staff Topic process.

Learnard suggested they put these questions about process on the retreat agenda. Destadio agreed.

F. Building Brains from the Beginning presentation

Johnson agreed the process would be good to discuss at the retreat, but the presentation was important and came from the Board of Education. Brown said it did not come from the BOE. Learnard said she had not seen it, but knew it was presented by a retired Fayette County educator. It dealt with the growing number of kindergartners who were unprepared to start school and explored how the community could support these children.

Destadio said he and Holland did not object to the subject, just how it got on the agenda. Brown said the presentation was on the Fayette County Board of Education's website for the September 9, 2024, meeting.

Johnson recalled that she ran for office on the pledge to represent children and families and could not allow this topic to be passed over. Learnard said that made two votes for the presentation. Destadio said he wanted to see the presentation, but only after they discussed the procedure. Learnard said the three of them could decide now to hear it. Brown said that's how it should have been done to begin with, but Learnard countered that the City Manager also could decide what went on the agenda. Brown said that would be discussed at the retreat.

Destadio agreed that this presentation should be on a future agenda.

G. Acknowledgement of Recreation Department for Hometown Holiday

Johnson commended the Recreation staff for the excellent job they did with the Hometown Holiday celebration.

Executive Session

Brown moved to adjourn to executive session at 8:25 p.m. to discuss the purchase, lease, or sale of real estate. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Brown moved to reconvene in regular session at 8:49 p.m. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary

Kim Learnard, Mayor