

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 2, 2025
9:30 AM

Call to Order

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met in work session on Thursday, January 2, 2025. 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

Election and Oath of Office of Mayor Pro-Tem

Destadio nominated Holland as Mayor Pro Tem. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously, and Learnard administered the oath of office.

Announcements, Awards, Special Recognition

A. Eagle Scout Service Project

Breygan Douglas of Boy Scout Troop 175 briefed Council on his Eagle Scout project, which was the reconstruction of two trail kiosks near the Somerby senior living facility, along with trail cleanup.

Public Comment

Keith Larson recalled an early 2000s community planning initiative by the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, called Fayette Visioning, saying it represented an example of cooperation and utilizing input from citizens. Larson expressed his hope that the new Recreation Master Plan would be embraced and added that he had information that could be helpful regarding the recommended new senior services center.

Agenda Changes

Work Session Discussion Items

A. Statewide Floating Homestead Exemption - HB 581

City Manager Justin Strickland noted that House Bill 581 was discussed in the December work session and also at a well-attended town hall meeting. Now he needed to know if Council wanted to opt in to the exemption, which did not require any action, or opt out, which required three public hearings before a March 1 deadline.

Learnard said local Mayors and City Managers had been meeting with County leaders but had not held a meeting since December 19, which was also the last time Council discussed it. She said she read in the newspaper that Brooks and Tyrone had decided to stay in, but Tyrone had concerns about the Flexible Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) that she thought were valid. Right now, though, Council needed to decide only if they were going to opt in or opt out.

Brown asked if any Fayette municipalities or the County had decided to opt out,

and Strickland said they had not, only the Board of Education had. Brown acknowledged that voters supported HB 581, but she was concerned that if another jurisdiction opted out, Peachtree City would be in a bad position regarding the required public hearings. She asked if it would be best to proceed as if there was a chance they might opt out. Learnard said the County Commission was scheduled to discuss what they would do at their January 9 meeting. She believed they would opt in, but the latest they could find out would be the 9th.

Brown agreed with Learnard that Peachtree City would probably opt in, but they needed more information on the FLOST and its restrictions. Peachtree City might be better off with a Transportation SPLOST (T-SPLOST), she remarked. Making up the revenue they would lose if they opted in was the most important thing.

Holland asked if the FLOST and opting in were tied together, and Learnard said they were separate decisions., Strickland pointed out that all jurisdictions in the county would have to opt in in order to run the FLOST. Holland said he was in favor of opting in but had reservations about a FLOST.

Citizens voted to support the exemption in HB 581, so it was right to opt in, Destadio stated, but it was concerning that they would be losing revenue. Johnson said she agreed that they should follow the voters' lead.

If they decided on a FLOST or T-SPLOST, it would have to go forward to the legislature, Brown remarked. They would have to adjust the budget for the loss of revenue the first year, then a sales tax could go on the ballot in 2026. She said she hoped citizens understood that they did not have all the data and information about the consequences right now.

Learnard confirmed that they all wanted to opt in.

Johnson noted that there was no municipal election in 2026, so if they decided on a sales tax, they would be sending voters to the polls for one issue. It was up to the County to call the referendum, Strickland stated. All the jurisdictions would negotiate on how the revenues would be divided.

B. Recreation Master Plan

The Recreation Master Plan had been a long time in the making, Strickland commented, and Council received a final draft on December 3. Cyndee Bonacci and Mack Cain of CPL were present to answer questions.

Learnard noted that this plan was a guide. It did not dictate what they had to do; it was what citizens said they wanted. Council would decide what should be implemented over the next decade and beyond. Learnard had questions about some figures in a table that compared national standards with Peachtree City's level of service. Bonacci said there seemed to be some numerical errors, and

those would be corrected.

Holland asked if the subsidy paid by Fayette County for the use of Peachtree City recreation facilities was adequate. Currently, it was \$150,000, and he felt that was too low. Bonacci said the report recommended it be raised to \$825,000 because their data showed that about 30% to 55% of participants in Peachtree City programs were County residents.

Holland commented on the length and complexity of the report, as did Brown. Brown remarked that there were a lot of routine maintenance items that did not seem to be getting done and that needed to be addressed. She cautioned that cost probably would be the biggest factor in following up on future projects. This was a good document, she stated, and citizens should be patient.

Bonacci told her the raw data was available in a spreadsheet, and there was a document that called for defining proactive and reactive maintenance crews. Strickland said the analysis of each location was done almost a year ago, and some projects had been completed. Bonacci said they divided the projects into three phases because they knew money had already been set aside for some. That was stated in the supplemental reports.

This was very comprehensive, Destadio remarked. He said they needed to identify what they had already done. Johnson said she looked forward to reading through this and to working with the Recreation Advisory Group to set priorities.

Holland said he looked for what the citizens wanted, and his summary was that maintenance was number one, followed by parks, then teen activities. Something else mentioned was a natatorium, which would probably have to be financed with a general obligation (GO) bond. A sports center also came up, and that, too, would probably need a bond. He stressed this was a 10-year plan and would need a lot of discussion.

All the members agreed that they would be willing to vote to adopt this document. Strickland told Bonacci they needed to look at the table Learnard had mentioned. Learnard noted they were in the process of creating a seven-member Recreation Advisory Group that would be a good resource. Council could also discuss recreation at their February retreat.

C. Update of Discharging Bows Ordinance

Brown brought this up at the last Council meeting, and Strickland said he and City Attorney Ted Meeker had looked at the laws regarding it. State law superseded the City ordinance that prohibited the discharge of bows for hunting purposes. This meant hunting with a bow on private property was allowed. He and Meeker made some changes to bring the City ordinance into compliance with State law.

Brown suggested adding the word “are” to the wording, and Strickland said that

would be fine.

Holland said he had an archery range in his back yard when he was a Boy Scout. Could they allow something like that here? Strickland said that would be a Council decision. Archery practice was prohibited in the City ordinance as it was currently written, and State law did not address it. Learnard said she was fine with the recommendation as it was. It dovetailed with State law. Destadio said they should just update the law to allow hunting, not practice.

Archery was a close-up sport, Brown noted, and practice was done with a pointed arrow, not one with a hunting tip. Archery was a skill, and practice was necessary.

Johnson said it made sense to have an ordinance that complied with State law regarding hunting, but she had to rely on experts in regard to target practice.

Brown suggested allowing for practice on private property with a regular tip, not a broadhead, arrow.

Learnard asked how she would feel about passing the ordinance staff had brought them and discussing practice ranges another time? That would bring them into immediate compliance. Brown said she was okay with that. Destadio agreed. He said they needed to consider distances from the neighboring properties and also from roads, noting that arrows often went astray during practice. Strickland said he did not know of any objective criteria regarding archery ranges.

Police Chief Janet Moon said this would have to be approved by the Chief of Police, but she knew of no guidelines or parameters. The Campus had recently asked about forming an archery team, and Moon said she and the City Solicitor discovered that Council would have to approve it. It would take some digging to find out the industry standards, and Moon said she would be reluctant to allow back yard practice because of the houses being so close in many neighborhoods.

D. Transportation Advisory Group Changes

There had been a resignation on the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG), Strickland said. He had intended to propose changes to the ordinance when a term expired, but this vacancy sped that timeline up.

Strickland proposed making it more like the ordinance creating the Recreation Advisory Group (RAG) regarding applications and who could sit on the group. They had gotten about 20 applications for the RAG, which was more than they had for TAG, and Strickland attributed that to the looser restrictions. He also thought they should remove the Public Works Director as a voting member and appoint an additional voting member. This was how the RAG was structured. They also would add some language allowing TAG members to solicit donations, although they would have to be approved by Council. That would be helpful with minor projects.

Holland said he wanted to ensure the application asked applicants to state their background in transportation. Strickland assured him that it would.

E. FY2025 Budget Amendment - Pension Trust Interest

Assistant Financial Services Director Kelly Bush said this was a housekeeping measure regarding interest on their pension contribution and catch-up funds recommended by the actuary.

F. EMS billing vendor's contract has moved to annual auto-renew contract

Fire Chief Clint Murphy explained this did not require Council action. The contract for EMS billing allowed for auto-renewal without changing anything. They liked the vendor's service and intended to go with auto-renewal. Bush said they had been with several companies, and this was by far the best. Brown asked if there was a number of years they could do auto-renewal before they had to seek bids. Bush said they would probably check on others at some point, but there was no mandate.

G. Recommendation for Benefits Broker

Human Resources Manager Nichole Baxley recommended Council approve NFP Corporate Services to provide health benefits broker services. She said they received two proposals, and NFP was the highest scoring after a committee review. Peachtree City had not issued a request for proposal for this since 2008, and the previous broker declined to participate.

Holland asked if any of the brokers they solicited were local, and Baxley said there were none in Peachtree City.

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

City Clerk Yasmin Julio said this and the following two items were routine housekeeping measures. The election qualifying information had to be approved by February 1. The qualifying dates were August 18 through 22, and voter registration would end October 6.

Brown asked about what would happen if they decided to change the Mayor and Council salaries after they approved this. Julio said changes in salaries would not go into effect for this election cycle. If they changed the salaries this year, it would not take effect until after the next election. She said she would send Council information as to what State law said.

**I. Resolution 01162025-XX-X Indemnification of Public Officials
NO ACTION TAKEN**

J. Legal Organ - Fayette County News

NO ACTION TAKEN

New Agenda Items

A. FY2025 Budget Amendment and Acceptance of Donation toward the Kedron Pool Boiler Replacment

An anonymous donor had given \$150,000 to the Peachtree City Aquatic Club, which gave the money to the City for the replacement of the Kedron Pool boiler.

Holland moved to approve New Agenda item A, budget amendment and acceptance of donation towards the Kedron pool boiler replacement. Destadio seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Council/Staff Topics

Learnard said the work session in February would be February 6, but the date of the regular Council meeting would be moved from February 20 to February 13 due to the school break.

Brown asked if, prior to them submitting the elections memorandum, they could find out from the Fayette County Board of Elections the difference in price of using hand-marked security paper ballots instead of the Dominion equipment.

Julio said counties were required to use whatever was approved by the Secretary of State. Security ballots were used for absentee voting, she noted. Peachtree City's elections were shared with all the municipalities that entered into an agreement with the County, and all must use the same method.

Brown said municipalities could do things differently, but Julio said only if they ran their own elections.

Executive Session

None

Adjourn

There being no further business, Destadio moved to adjourn at 10:47 a.m. Holland seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary

Kim Learnard, Mayor