

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 29, 2026
9:00 AM

The Peachtree City Council held its winter retreat on Thursday, January 29 and Friday January 30, 2026, at the Ben Robertson Community Center in Kennesaw, Georgia. Mayor Kim Learnard convened the first day's session at 9 a.m. Council Members Suzanne Brown, Clinton Holland, Laura Johnson, and Michael Polacek were present, along with City Manager Justin Strickland, Assistant City Manager Chris Hobby, City Clerk Yasmin Julio, and Deputy City Clerk Stacey Collins. The facilitator was Michael Hourihan of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia.

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Hourihan gave some information on his background and his work. He guaranteed that by the end of the next day they would have a priority list of projects and a workable action plan of how to move them forward.

Kennesaw Mayor Derek Easterling shared his thoughts on leadership and governance and described some of Kennesaw's assets, such as the new recreation center. Hourihan seized on one of Easterling's points, commenting that leaders did not lead from the front, they led from the back by providing direction and vision.

Hourihan asked the Council to define governance. The Mayor said it meant providing the infrastructure and services that citizens had come to expect. Holland added that it was making sure there were zero complaints from citizens. Julio suggested it involved leading.

Governance was how an organization was set up and operated, Hourihan stated, and it could be functional or dysfunctional. Elected officials set the strategy, which was the vision and mission for the city, then shared that vision with staff who would follow through with the tactics they needed to achieve it. Council should know why they were doing something and what would happen if they did not do it. The action plan would help them get from where they were now to where they wanted to be.

Hourihan also talked about the importance of presenting a unified front to the public, even if the outcome was not what you personally wanted. If the majority of Council voted for something, then everyone should get behind it, at least publicly, he said. It was now the mission. He promised they would talk later about consensus and making the best decisions for the good of the city and its residents, even if it was difficult.

He asked Council to consider themselves as being like chaperones at a school dance. They were on the balcony, looking down at the party. Staff was sometimes overseeing things from the balcony but were usually on the floor in the thick of the action. They all worked toward achieving the vision, but their roles were different.

Council had the big picture, but their direction to staff should pass through the City Manager, who decided how staff should work to achieve those goals. Council should not come down to the dance floor to give orders to staff, Hourihan explained. The City Manager should be the intermediary.

Hourihan asked for their thoughts. Strickland said he thought they had a good Council that did a good job of communicating to him and letting him talk to staff.

Learnard then referred back to the balcony scenario, recalling that the City Manager had recently brought them a list of proposed changes in Human Resources policies. It was a routine matter that he needed done in order to do his job, she said, but some Council members spent hours scrutinizing and finetuning the requests when what they should do was trust the City Manager when he said that's what he needed to do his job. Hourihan agreed that it was not the best use of anyone's time. The vision was to reduce turnover of City staff, and they should trust the City Manager to recommend the right action.

The issue with that specific instance, Brown offered, was that questions were not being answered behind the scenes. She discovered that the written policy had not kept up with what staff had been doing. Things had not been done according to the written policy for quite some time, she said, and she found that unacceptable. Hourihan said that was understandable, and the policy should be changed. Brown said she felt the delay in changing the policy was an egregious policy.

Brown then mentioned that Holland had to ask a lot of questions; that was his personality style, and he needed to do that in order to reach a decision. Learnard remarked that, at some point, they needed to do what Mayor Easterling had said, and get their questions answered ahead of time and just vote. It did not need to be turned into a diatribe in a meeting.

The public was watching, Hourihan cautioned, and forming an opinion of how the City was being run. Their behavior should match their intentions. Debate should take place at work sessions, and there should be a unified front after the vote at a regular meeting. He also warned them against keeping score when things did not go their way.

They were having trouble with making decisions and then moving on, Learnard stated. Hourihan said they should make decisions and move on. Hourihan also reminded them of the law of unintended consequences, saying they should weigh intentions versus behaviors.

Council then discussed their expectations from each other. Polacek said he appreciated open-mindedness and talking through disagreements rather than hashing it out in the public eye. Listening to understand was important, Hourihan remarked. Polacek said he respected every one of his peers and had been pleased with his reception so far.

Holland felt respect for each other was essential to good communication and key to the success of the Council. That respect would be passed down to staff, he stated. Hourihan said that trust and respect were on a spectrum, and it took time to build both of those. Learnard said trust stemmed from honesty.

After a short break, the session resumed at 10:23 a.m. Finance Director Kelly Bush, Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Director Tyler Runyon, Library Director Jill Prouty, City Engineer Dave Borkowski, Planning and Development Director Shayla Reed, Human Resources Director Dr. Teaa Allston-Bing, Recreation Director Harold Layton, Fire Chief Clint Murphy, and Police Chief Janet Moon joined the group, and Hourihan asked everyone to introduce themselves.

He told the group that having clear expectations was the only way to be happy. Later they would talk about what Council expected from staff and what staff expected from Council.

Five Pillars Project and Review of Previous Priorities

Strickland said he wanted to update Council and staff on progress with ongoing and planned projects. After that, staff would present information on some current and future projects, but Council would not be asked to decide anything right now on most of them.

He started with their first pillar of good government, A Safe, Family-Friendly Community. The Carriage Lane cart path was a project of the 2017 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), Strickland said. It would not be done until the bridge over SR 54 to McIntosh High was completed because they were connected. Strickland said he thought they would bid out the design for this.

The library elevator was complete. The North Hill path had been designed and the bid would go out this week, Borkowski said.

The railroad would only give them six feet for the Paschal Road path, which would limit it to one cart at a time. Borkowski said CSX would consider it as a sidewalk for pedestrians only. They could move forward with the six-foot design, said Strickland, and Holland and Learnard said they would like to go ahead and build the six-foot wide path. Johnson agreed. Brown said they should put up warning signs and build it to get the carts off the road.

The design was complete on the Walt Banks and Peachtree Parkway path. Borkowski said it should be started this year, but getting the easements might be a problem.

The bridge to connect Drake Field and All Children's Playground, a 2017 SPLOST project, was in design with Kiewit, Borkowski said. Strickland said this was a Kiewit project because it was part of a package with the SR 54 bridge and the Gateway Bridge.

Would this interfere with drainage issues at Drake Field? Holland asked, and Strickland

said it should not. Strickland said Layton was confident they could work on the drainage problems in-house. Would it interfere with the dredging of Lake Peachtree? Holland wondered, and Brokowski said they would have to look at options other than what they had done in the past.

The Pebblepocket Splash Pad had been bid out, but they did not like the bids. There was \$391,000 left for the project, Strickland said. Johnson said she had been concerned last year about the impact on the paying pool at Glenloch by it being next to a free splash pad, but it turned out the pool still did really well.

She said she would be comfortable pivoting from the Pebblepocket splash pad plan and mentioned that many people had commented to her that they would like to see a playground at the Meade pickleball complex. Johnson acknowledged there was a need for shade structures as well and also mentioned that the big screen they rented for football watching parties at Drake Field cost \$5,000 per event. She proposed the splash pad money be used for a park at Meade, shade structures, and a big screen.

Strickland said they could discuss it that afternoon with Layton. Holland said sun shades would be a good purchase, and Polacek remarked that the lack of them was a complaint he often heard.

The City Hall elevator was under construction, Strickland continued. The path along Kelly Drive to the businesses on SR 74 was making progress, but not in design yet. Strickland said they needed to discuss the difficulty of replacing sidewalks with paths along State highways.

The County had applied for a TIP grant for a SR 54 corridor study, Strickland said. He listed two more items that were completed from last year's project list: free admission at the splash pad and an increased senior homestead exemption. The burn ordinance had been passed, but they would be discussing it again during this retreat. The Police Chief was now allowed to swear in new Police officers. They had instituted a deer management program on City property, and Strickland said he was satisfied with the results.

The second of the Five Pillars, Active Healthy Community, included the Tennis Center renovations. Some had been done, and Strickland said almost \$300,000 was left in the Tennis Center account, but that money and more would be needed for the new courts. Holland asked about drainage problems on the clay courts, and Strickland said the courts needed to be completely re-done. They discussed lighting projects at Meade, as well as at the lacrosse and baseball fields, which were done, as was the Recreation Master Plan and the Lake Peachtree bridge.

The City wanted the County to pay for most of the lake dredging, and the contract did not allow for that until 2030. Another project that had been on their list and had been accomplished was re-forming the relationship with Southern Conservation Trust. The pickleball venue at Meade was under construction, and they agreed to discuss shade

structures. They would be getting shade structures at Glenloch, along with new furniture. Strickland said they would be talking about Glenloch and other recreation projects later.

Prouty said studies of foot traffic at various times at the library showed that the slowest times were between 6 and 8 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Holland said he did not see any need to expand hours, and Prouty remarked they had adjusted schedules and she was content to leave the operating hours as they were. Prouty noted the big improvement with the interior renovations.

Layton said he would talk about the Drake Field restroom project later. The Kelly Drive Park was in the future, Strickland continued, but it would get done. Holland mentioned plans to relocate the Veterans' Memorial to Kelly Drive Park when ready. \$1 million had been allocated in the 2023 SPLOST.

The Kedron pool enclosure was in design, Strickland continued, but there was lots to talk about later that day. The hockey rink was not funded, and Holland said he wanted Council to discuss it the next day. The Battery Way Park update was also coming later.

The Recreation Master Plan called for taking a big open space at Braelinn and use it for several sports, including a cricket pitch. The Mayor suggested calling it a multi-purpose space, and Holland said he wanted bleachers there. They needed to think about lighting, Strickland added. When the new pickleball complex opened, Council agreed that they would convert the pickleball courts at Braelinn back to tennis.

The conversation moved on to the popularity of the park at Braelinn and the need for a playground. Strickland said they could start the design with some of the \$1.2 million in SPLOST money designated for playgrounds. Learnard suggested the Recreation Advisory Group (RAG) look at all the tot lots and see which ones could be closed due to lack of use. The rest of the money could be used for other tot lots and parks, Holland observed.

Moving on to projects that fell under the Attractive Community pillar, Strickland said the Gateway Bridge landscaping was complete. The fieldhouse roof was done; the Tree City USA designation had been completed; a backyard chicken ordinance had been adopted; the Liberty Tree had been planted; the Planning Commission's request to form a UDO Committee was approved. The vines on the SR 74 soundwall would be removed in the spring.

Strickland said they had looked into the (lack of) brightness of the MacDuff bridge sign and got a price of \$25,000 to install brighter ones. They could see how much money was left at the end of the fiscal year. The Tyrone welcome bridge was on the path master plan. The Planning Commission was working on an invasive plant ordinance.

They discussed problems with silt buildup in the lagoons. Learnard said the lagoon at Luther Glass Park in particular was in need of maintenance. Holland said he thought it

should be a separate project.

The Peachtree Parkway/Crosstown roundabout was in design, and land acquisition would be the next step. It would be a long process, Strickland advised, with Borkowski saying utility relocation would be a major undertaking.

Polacek asked if they could start on the Parkway/Robinson Road roundabout, and Strickland said they could move ahead on design once some of the path projects were knocked out.

The construction of dual left turn lanes at Huddleston Road would start in March, and the improved signage for the SR 54/74 intersection was currently being put in place.

Under the pillar of A Thriving and Resilient Business Community, Strickland noted they had created an economic development manager position. They had said they wanted to create an economic development plan, but Strickland said he would have to see if he thought that would be useful. A grant writer had been hired, but the government then put a freeze on grants.

Council would vote on the boundary study request for proposals (RFPs) at the February 12 meeting. Public/private partnerships were on the list, and Holland added that he wanted to discuss that further with Council. The addition of non-profit groups to the website had been done, as had the listings of yard sales.

Renovations to City Hall, a project under the Innovative, High-Performing, and Sustainable Community pillar, were underway. They were waiting on money from Congress for the Police Department expansion and gun range, but a bond would be needed for funding, as well.

The E-911 study had been done, and Murphy said they were working on the Huddleston tower based on the results. The County had been working to fix things, and the final report was being drafted by the consultants, and Murphy thought they would get a recommendation on whether they should continue to partner with the County or look for another partner.

They would be talking about the employee development evaluations later, Strickland reported. He said maintenance was always ongoing, but he was happy with where they were and would be removing it from the list. After lunch, they would hear about the stormwater rate study.

They had talked about health insurance options for Council, as well as deciding against changing Council elections to popular vote as a way to save money by eliminating runoffs. He said Council did not want a strategic plan, but Julio suggested they consider listing the appropriate one of the Five Pillars by each agenda item. Learnard wanted to talk more about that later.

Plans had been to hold two Council retreats per year, but they had not been doing that.

The budget processes had been updated, and they had changed the schedule of work sessions and Council meetings. The 2027 Comprehensive Plan would come up later in the retreat, as would talks about the general fund balance. Council had agreed to let the Planning Commission alternate member vote when another member was absent. Another change was to the out-of-city recreation fees with the County.

Staff Topics

After a short break for lunch, the discussion resumed at 12:39 p.m. with department heads talking with Council about pressing issues.

Engineering

Borkowski explained that the degradation of the stormwater system was outpacing the ability to keep up with repairs and emergency projects. A consultant had looked at the system and rate structures, with the goal to increase revenues and make it self-funding. Borkowski explained that residential customers accounted for much more revenue than commercial.

He talked about how rates were set and how credits could be granted as incentives. He mentioned that the Fayette County Schools got a credit of 75%, which the consultant said was not the norm and recommended bringing it down to 50%.

Currently, a complex tiered system for billing was utilized based on the impervious surfaces on a property. Customers were billed twice a year. Borkowski said the rate schedule was last updated in 2013, and the funding was not keeping up with inflation and needs. They had to dip into reserves for the last couple of emergency projects. He went over the costs for items such as pipelining and also the need for additional employees and equipment to enable them to execute upcoming projects. Holland asked about pro-active maintenance, and Borkowski said they tried, but could not keep up with the aging system.

He showed the existing fee structure and also how they proposed to simplify it by eliminating the tiers for single-family homes and going to flat fees. Some people would pay more, but others would save money. Rates for attached residential would change, too. Commercial customers would see higher rates, but there were credits they could apply for, Borkowski noted. He went over the revised rates for the various types of customers and showed how the residential, commercial and industrial contributions would be almost the same amount. A comparison of Peachtree City's proposed new rates to neighboring cities showed that Peachtree City was in the middle.

The consultant recommended a rate of \$14 a month per residence, but Borkowski said they were looking at \$10. Strickland said inflation had been about 40% since the last increase, and this would be about the same amount. If they did not raise it to \$14 now, they would need to evaluate the stormwater fee and inflation each year. They would also be looking at a \$5.5 million bond for capital projects along with the rate increase.

Strickland said they would bring this to a work session and do this presentation over

again.

Johnson suggested they should look at a higher rate that would not have to be raised for five years or so. Hourihan observed it might be less painful to go ahead and raise the fee to \$14. It would hurt at first, but then it would be over. If an increase came up every year, Council would fight the same battle over and over.

Bush stated that residential stormwater could be put on the County tax bill like City taxes were. That would be easier on citizens and would help the City keep track of stormwater collections when a home was sold. Brown said many people would like this because they were aggravated that they got another bill.

The group decided to put the rate increase to \$14 on a future Council agenda.

Executive Services

Julio stated that Brown had wanted them to consider the timing of the appointment of members to boards, authorities, committees and groups, saying they should coincide with Council terms. These volunteer boards had staggered terms that did not always coincide with municipal elections. The length of terms varied, with the Planning Commission three years and the CVB Board two years, for example. Julio added that certain authorities, including the Airport Authority and Planning Commission, had terms that were approved by the State and changing them would require going through the State Legislature.

Every two years, Brown commented, they had elections for two Council seats or two Council seats and the Mayor. Volunteer board appointments were made in October. Elections were in November, so it was possible that there could be a board that most people on the Council did not want. She thought board appointments could be made in January when the new members had been sworn in.

Julio said the term would have to be changed because some terms were four years, so some Council members would never get to appoint a member. Also, there were times when newly elected officials who did not understand what those boards did. They would be interviewing people for a job they did not understand. If the appointments remained in October, the new Council members would have a chance to get a better understanding.

Johnson said she could see both sides, but there were only so many ways they could alter it. She had not seen enough problems to merit a change. Learnard agreed with that and noted that an outgoing Council member already had understanding of these groups. She thought the process worked. Polacek said he had no opinion, and Holland said it should stay as it was.

Council did not renew the last resolution affirming Peachtree City as a City of Civility. Julio provided them with a sample resolution and asked if this was something they brought back to a meeting. Johnson was in favor of that, and Holland he would be, now

that their new member had joined the Council. Learnard agreed. Julio asked if it could be on the February 12. Brown did not agree, but the majority prevailed.

Strickland said they had remained a City of Ethics, which did not have to be renewed every year.

Finance

In July, Bush stated, the State raised the threshold for sealed bids from \$100,000 to \$250,000. Peachtree City's ordinance still said \$100,000, and that change would be coming before Council soon.

She then remarked that the City Manager could approve budgeted items up to \$40,000, but every budgeted item had already been approved by Council. Bush thought the limit should be raised to \$100,000, while Hobby had asked why budgeted items needed additional approval at all. She said this would make the purchasing process more efficient.

The threshold for unbudgeted items was \$5,000. If it was more than that, the City Manager had to approve it. Bush asked Council if they were comfortable raising that and to what amount? Strickland said he texted some other City managers, and the lowest amount any of them had was \$100,000 for budgeted items. The \$40,000 had been in place for a long time in Peachtree City.

Learnard remarked that it gave Council the opportunity to be aware of what was being purchased, and she could not imagine they would deny a budgeted item. Bush said she presented an intent to finance list every September and the budget also contained a list of intended purchases.

Holland asked what he needed to do his job, and Strickland said he would be comfortable with \$100,000. It would streamline the process. Brown said she was in favor, and Bush said Strickland could notify Council in his weekly email. Holland proposed a limit of \$200,000, and the other Council members agreed. Bush suggested \$50,000 for unbudgeted items. This would be coming to a future Council meeting. Bush clarified that budget amendments would always have to come to Council. Learnard said this was what the City Manager needed to do his job.

Bush also said that they would be adding some new requirements for bids between \$100,000 to \$250,000, even though they would no longer be sealed bids.

She then said she was asking for an additional full-time deputy court clerk to help handle the increased caseload and additional requirements. Learnard told her to do it now if it was needed, but Strickland said to wait with personnel requests until the HR director's presentation.

Fire-Rescue

Murphy showed a photo of the three-story fire tower he was asking for, saying this type

was the least expensive and could be re-configured for various purposes. Fire crews could train on the tower and having it would give Peachtree City points toward their Insurance Services Office (ISO) to help them keep their top rating. The cost would be \$353,000, which included the cost of the tower and the foundation.

Johnson mentioned that this was in the proposed fiscal year 2026 budget but was removed. She said it should have been done, and Polacek agreed. Brown said her thought on removing it was that they could find the money later, and Bush said they had money in reserves.

Murphy asked how Council wanted to proceed? Strickland suggested they put it on an agenda, do a budget amendment and buy it out of reserves.

He then showed plans for the new Fire Station 85 on SR 74 South, pointing out various administrative and living areas and saying it would complement nearby buildings. Hobby said they would take the plans and get the pricing down to a guaranteed maximum. Learnard noted there was \$2.5 million in a SPLOST line item, but that would not be enough. Strickland noted that SPLOST was projected to bring in \$67 million but \$80 million would be more like it.

Police

Moon said she understood Council wanted to talk about path enforcement and the possibility of creating a division to handle that. She said there were not any large issues to deal with; kids riding mini-bike type vehicles seemed to be the biggest problem.

Brown mentioned the abundance of illegal vehicles on the paths and said she thought about having someone stationed on the paths, maybe at Battery Way, to stop these vehicles. Word would get out that the City was cracking down.

It cost about \$226,000 to onboard additional head count, Moon remarked. Creating a path patrol would require four additional officers at a total cost of about \$1 million. Code Enforcement was supposed to be the eyes and ears of the Police on the paths. Moon said she was committed to enforcing the path rules and this year, she had some additional school resource officers and planned to use them on the paths during the summer. She asked Council to allow her to try that for one year.

The Rotary Club had offered to donate a golf cart to the Police Department. This would make patrolling the paths easier, Moon said, and Council agreed that would be good.

Planning and Zoning

Reed explained that the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) could draft the comprehensive plan update. Strickland said he wanted to meet with the ARC, but he had worked with other regional commissions. Although they were not obligated to the ARC, he did not think they should do the comp plan in-house. Reed said she had been contacted by several private firms.

Learnard asked about cost, and Reed said there was no cost with the ARC. She said she had worked with them on a comp plan in the past, and they did a good job but looked at things on a regional level.

Brown wanted to review any surveys before they were released to the public, saying that ARC had its own agenda not in line with Peachtree City's. Reed said Council could review documents before they were put out to the public, and the ARC would work with staff and the Council.

The RFP had gone out for the UDO consultant, Reed said, and it would come before Council in March. Strickland reminded them that several years ago, \$120,000 was budgeted for a consultant, but the UDO project was abandoned. That money was put in a contingency fund and was still available. Reed said they were asking for the study to be completed by the end of the year or first of next year. The Planning Commission would still oversee the work, Strickland said.

Reed also said there had been some problems with the transition of the permitting team. She was requesting that they add a permanent full-time employee to handle phone calls. This person had been on the job in a temporary role for about six months. They were still working to improve services, and the new position would help. This could be on the March agenda, Strickland stated.

Recreation

Recreation was coming off a hard year, Layton remarked, and they were trying to get back on track.

He said \$120,000 had been budgeted to replace four spotlights at the amphitheater, and the bids had come in at \$84,000. Layton also mentioned getting two fryers at \$2,191 each and a grill at \$2,100 before the first concert on April 4. They were also looking to get four murals painted at a cost of \$8,500.

He wanted to move the Special Events Assistant to Special Events and Marketing Coordinator, which meant a budget increase of \$7,685.49. That person was currently performing those duties now. They currently had a part-time Athletic Coordinator and needed to make that position full-time for a budget increase of \$51,308. The new programming this person had brought had a revenue stream of more than \$47,500, Layton said, and they were looking for ways to bring in more revenue.

Then he moved on to the big project—the Kedron Aquatics facility. Design Option A maintained the current pool configurations and called for replacing the plaster walls. The structure would cover the same area as the bubble, and existing plumbing would be utilized. Option B added ramps in conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, meaning one wall of the pool would have to be torn out. Other specificities were the same. Borkowski mentioned that, structurally, Option B was not ideal.

Layton said the rough cost for these options would be \$450 to \$500 per square foot, bringing the total estimate to \$3.6 million.

Option C-1 called for moving the instructional pool to accommodate a better ramp design. There would be one pool structure for two pools. It would also allow for a larger sun deck that was away from the parking lot.

Layton said Option C-2 was the better option in his opinion because of the location of the ramps at the front. Even with a ramp, they would need steps as a second means of egress, he reported, and those would be hard to fit in on a lap pool. The cost for either C-1 or C-2 would be about \$6 million to \$6.5 million for the total project.

Learnard asked if C-1 and C-2 meant digging a new hole and having two pools side by side, and Layton said that was correct. Borkowski said he supported the C options because he was worried about structural issues when constructing around 30-year-old pools. ADA requirements made it tight for wheelchair access when putting the Sprung structure around the pool, Layton noted. The alternative would be to add a ramp to the instructional pool and use the current lift system in the big pool. They would still have to add the steps, though. Learnard asked Layton his opinion, and he said some form of C-2 would fix a lot of the issues.

There could be an Option D, which would be C-2 built at a different location, Layton revealed. He did not have a cost estimate.

Council discussed several issues, including the location of the Sprung structure on C-2. Layton said the sun deck would probably prove to be very popular, and Borkowski said there were engineering advantages with that layout, too.

Johnson mentioned that five public high school swim teams used the Kedron pool, but the school system would not be contributing at all to this project. Layton noted that the schools would have to find another place to practice while this facility was under construction, and they could negotiate a price for them to return. Right now the schools paid \$10 a child. Johnson observed that many times Peachtree City citizens had to wait for the high school swim teams to finish practice before they could use the pool.

Johnson asked if this would be part of the facilities bond, and Layton said it was. Brown wanted fees to at least be high enough to recoup some of the costs. She went on to say that the people using the pool should pay for it, but the Mayor intervened to note that Recreation was a service that the City provided because that was what citizens wanted. Johnson noted that outstanding facilities added to property values.

Holland wanted to pursue C-2 or D. If the City was going to do it, they should do it right. Brown remarked that no one had mentioned that a larger facility would have larger maintenance costs. Polacek said that was his concern and that the school system agreement needed renegotiation. Learnard stated that she would support C-2, and Johnson said she had misgivings about all the options.

Moving on, Layton explained they currently paid United Pools \$392,950 annually to manage the Kedron and Glenloch pools, the Glenloch splashpad, and the City Hall fountain. This was the final year of the contract, and United Pools had asked for an increase. There had been issues with United, and Layton said he had talked with them and believed the issues were resolved but wanted to put an RFP out for pool management services. He knew there would be an increase regardless of who they contracted with. Depending on the details of the contract, the cost could be between \$567,000 to around \$646,000, with \$475,000 of that going for Kedron.

Layton said he wanted to use this year when Kedron was closed to put out the RFP. When they got those numbers back, they could look at setting the fee schedule. Strickland said he had tasked Layton with figuring out what it would cost to run the pools in-house.

The World Cup was coming to Atlanta this year, and Layton said they had a lot of activities in the works and a lot of people were willing to partner with them.

For the Fourth of July, he had looked into the possibility of having a drone show, and the cost for 100 drones would be \$40,000 for 15 minutes. He had researched the cost of a free concert at The Fred and what artists were available in a price range of \$25,000 to \$100,000. Layton said his maintenance techs were willing to work extra hours for the concert.

Johnson had concerns about the limited size of the amphitheater and thought maybe a carnival with rides would be better. Holland mentioned that this would be the 250th anniversary of the United States this year and wanted a patriotic program.

The parade would follow the same format as last year, and Layton said the Peachtree City Wind Ensemble would be playing in front of the library before the fireworks.

Strickland liked the carnival idea. The Police Chief said they would have to pay for outside security if there was an extra day of events because the officers could not handle the addition to their already heavy July 4th workload.

Layton estimated the total cost for everything they had discussed at around \$300,000. Johnson said she wanted to know what they were going to do before agreeing to a number. Learnard wanted to know more about the drone show, and others assured her it was visible from a long distance and would be amazing. Polacek said 100 drones did not sound like enough. The drone show could start at 9:20 p.m., followed by the fireworks, Layton explained. Council agreed to go for the drone show.

Layton said a carnival would be more of a public-private partnership, with the City offering the site, and the carnival company providing everything else. Julio said it was probably too late to get someone booked for this year. Johnson suggested a smaller event with a bouncy house and so on.

Holland asked for a list of the possibilities and the costs. They agreed on the drone show and needed to see what artists they could get for a free concert on July 3. Learnard said her inclination was to not hold the concert. They should not spend the money and put staff to the extra effort for an event that could accommodate only 3,000 people. Hobby reported they could do the drone show and get a Ferris wheel and a carousel for \$60,000. He proposed allocating \$100,000 and let Recreation see what they could put together for the Fourth.

Layton explained the details of the sun shades proposed for Glenloch. He moved on to a more controversial project, the restrooms at Battery Way, saying residents in that area were very much against them. The restrooms would be similar to what was at the Line Creek Nature Area, and Learnard said they would protect the neighbors as much as possible. Polacek noted that it was unclear what exactly the neighbors objected to. RAG had asked them to propose some ideas. Layton then showed a proposed design for Drake Field restrooms.

Another proposed purchase was a 16 foot by 9 foot LED screen on a trailer for \$120,421. It could be used in any location, and they could sell advertisements on signs around the screens. This was a little larger than the screen they rented for \$5,000 per use.

Additional shade structures were needed at Picnic Park and they had a quoted installed price of \$18,441.

Because the session was running long, Strickland said he would distribute information to Council and let Dr. TAB give a brief presentation. He would talk to Council later about her proposals. She said she had met with employees in all departments, and she was going to talk about a few of their requests.

She explained a proposed increase in the annual leave cap, saying Peachtree City was below market. She also mentioned adding an additional tier to the leave structure. She and Council discussed how this would work, with the Mayor concluding that Council trusted her and Strickland to reconcile what employees wanted with what the City could do.

Allston-Bing presented a timeline of how the merit program and cost of living adjustments (COLA) had been used in Peachtree City. Merit increases had been used in the past but were dropped for several years and re-instituted in 2025, then put on pause in 2026 due to budget. She asked for it to be reinstated because it provided a way to tie compensation with performance. Employees had been asking about it. Strickland said they needed to have a conversation about the future of the merit program in general.

She next mentioned that a compensation and classification study was needed. It was recommended every three years, and the last was done in 2023, but it was not

implemented. Allston-Bing also gave information on an incentive offered to employees who opted out of the City's health insurance coverage.

Paid parental leave for up to six weeks was another option she presented to Council. Council agreed this would be a good idea. They also agreed that the City should begin paying the pension dues for Police and Fire. The cost would be \$32,760.

Fayette County Development Authority

Staff left the meeting at 4:50 p.m. The retreat resumed at 5:01 p.m. with Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA) President Niki Vanderslice. She began by saying that more than 700 people participated in creating an economic plan for Fayette County last year and devised some strategies to initiate it. She told Council it was up to them to figure out how Peachtree City could integrate into the plan.

Part of the strategy involved tweaking the traditional five targeted industries. The new plan incorporated six: corporate headquarters, digital and creative media, legacy business and industry, sports and health performance, advanced manufacturing, and technology. Vanderslice talked about the strategies for supporting these industries.

She mentioned that of the 127,000 people who lived in Fayette County, only 12,000 of those worked in the county. About 41,000 Fayette residents left the county for work, and almost the same number commuted from other counties to their jobs in Fayette.

Vanderslice went on to talk about future plans and possibilities to attract new jobs and build new facilities, both industrial and sports-related, some of which involved cooperation between the County and the cities. They also discussed how annexation would factor into this.

The goals of Foremost Fayette were:

- create a unified vision through collaboration and communication;
- engage in an ongoing targeted communication campaign related to economic development;
- explore future growth needs for the Development Authority;
- embrace legacy businesses while seeking economic diversification;
- continue to build a more livable community.

They moved on to discuss housing issues, and the looming problem of aging residents and young people having few options for affordable housing in walkable communities. It was more profitable for a builder to put one million dollar house on an acre than it was to put four \$250,000 homes on that acre, Brown said, with Vanderslice replying that was where the City could offer incentives to make these projects more viable.

Other upcoming projects were discussed, and Council told Vanderslice they needed to talk with her further. The Mayor said Council should be aware of what was going on

around them and look at the consequences.

Julio mentioned that Peachtree City's occupational tax was based on the number of employees a business had. Other jurisdictions based their occupational tax on revenue. Unless they changed this, Peachtree City would never make a lot of revenue like those cities were doing from large industries.

The group adjourned for the day at 6:32 p.m.

City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Friday, January 30, 2026
9:00 AM

The Peachtree City Council continued its winter retreat on Friday January 30, 2026, at the Ben Robertson Community Center in Kennesaw, Georgia. Mayor Kim Learnard convened the second day's session at 9:05 a.m. Council Members Suzanne Brown, Clinton Holland, Laura Johnson, and Michael Polacek were present, along with City Manager Justin Strickland, Assistant City Manager Chris Hobby, City Clerk Yasmin Julio, and Deputy City Clerk Stacey Collins. The facilitator was Michael Hourihan of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia.

The group considered what had been discussed the previous day, which Holland said he was proud of the exchange they had with staff. There were always tough decisions to be made and Hourihan said they needed to always consider what was best for the City. The opinions of the loudest people were not always the opinion of the majority.

Hourihan told them they needed to look at the demographics for Georgia in 2050 and make decisions with regard to the coming population changes, especially growth in the 55 and older population.

Next, he wanted them to finish the conversation about what they wanted from each other and from staff. In addition to having good communication passed through the City Manager, staff wanted Council to be consistent, Hourihan stated.

He had often heard from staff in other cities that Council kept information from them, and that they were too concerned with public opinion. Brown said staff could tell them what they wanted, but Council had to face the taxpayers. It was a balancing act, Hourihan agreed.

Learnard commended Strickland for putting together a top-notch staff that knew what they needed to do their jobs. Brown said she often wished she could call a staff member when she had a quick question, instead of having to go through the City Manager. Strickland said he understood, but it was a matter of respecting staff's time.

Learnard then said that Strickland and staff were very good at providing information, but there had been times when Council had been hard on staff by being inconsistent in their decisions. Strickland handled that like a professional, she noted.

What did they want from each other? Hourihan asked. Johnson acknowledged that they got frustrated with each other, but she thought they did a good job of getting past things and communicated well.

Learnard wanted honesty, recalled that Strickland spent weeks answering questions

about the budget only to have two Council members decide at the 11th hour that they would not pass that budget. She said it was unfair to Strickland and everyone who had worked on the budget. Now they had the opportunity this year to have a very public process, and she asked the City Manager to restrict all discussions to the five or so public meetings they had planned. Polacek said he supported that.

Last year, Learnard said, Strickland spent many hours in individual conversations about the budget, only to get slapped in the face during a meeting when they were supposed to pass the budget. This year, she asked that all budget conversations be done in public.

Hourihan said they needed to move past last year. They had the opportunity to create a new future.

Tied in with that, Learnard continued, was the concept that when they make a decision they stick with it. Last year they decided against an annexation study; now, they were asking staff to repeat the process. They had voted unanimously to adopt a burn ban. She knew change was hard, and citizens would complain, but they needed to move on and come up with ideas for yard debris pickup. The idea of going back and second-guessing decisions was very hard on staff, Learnard remarked.

Strickland said Peachtree City had the best staff he had ever worked with. At the staff retreat in December, though, many of them mentioned that 2025 was a tough year, and they felt like they had a lack of direction from Council. He said he told them he thought they would be having a better direction going forward, with clear goals established. The new comp plan would help and having a full Council meant that decisions would be made.

Hourihan noted that inconsistency was very challenging to a staff. Strickland stated that many of them watched the Council meetings and saw the occasional discord. Julio's concern was that staff was putting in a lot of work coming up with plans and proposals, only to have Council dissect them and sometimes lay them aside.

They had work sessions, Learnard stated, that provided the opportunity to ask questions and have conversations. When they got to the regular meeting, they should be able to bring the item up, have a motion and a second, maybe a brief comment, then a vote. She requested that Holland ask his questions at the work session, not the meetings. Holland said he always had questions and had to get them answered, but he pledged to try to keep them to the work sessions.

Brown said she felt like the session yesterday helped staff see that Council was not working against them. Learnard said she believed that is because Council stayed on the balcony and let staff tell them what they needed in order to do their jobs. Strickland said he just wanted Council to trust staff's opinions, and Julio asked that they respect the research staff had done.

Hourihan then led an exercise to help everyone determine their communication style as either bold, expressive, sympathetic/steady, or technical and how all these styles could work together.

Priorities

Hourihan divided the Council members from staff and asked them to list four priorities for Peachtree City for the next year. Staff's list was staff additions, merit/COLA raise, facilities bond, public art, and adequate funding for excellence.

Learnard asked about the last one, and Hobby explained that they should aim for the best in whatever they did. However, many times they demanded excellence, but only wanted to fund adequate. Learnard said she felt excellence came from staff.

Polacek wondered about public art, and Julio said they had discussed establishing a public art program similar to what Council saw on their retreat in Suwannee a few years ago. Hobby had drafted a public art program plan. Julio said ideas included outdoor art exhibits, and Holland suggested it even spread over to benches along the paths. Julio noted that funding would be needed, but Hourihan asked how much would really be required? The City could provide materials, and the artist could do the work for the exposure. Hobby said his plan mentioned asking developers to donate to the city's art program. They would need an arts advisory group, too, Holland remarked. Council agreed that the arts program was something they could move forward with.

Learnard asked about staff additions and merit pay and did Strickland want that on the next year's budget? Julio said she wanted to transfer the photographer/videographer position to full-time now. Public Works needed three more maintenance techs in order to create a full-time highway crew. Hobby said it would be good to have them before spring, and they decided to move money from the annual temp employee budget. Council agreed the day before on a full-time Planning employee and shifting the Recreation employees as Layton had asked.

Hourihan then stated that each person would get five votes to use to select what they considered the most important priorities. They broke for lunch and a tour of Kennesaw's new community center at 12:06 p.m.

The retreat resumed at 12:50 p.m.

Strickland mentioned a pothole in Wilshire Village. It was on a private driveway and was not the City's responsibility. The City Attorney advised Strickland to warn the owner, then put barriers and block the road until the owner fixed it.

Fayette Forward was talking about naming the County path system, he said, but it did not mean Peachtree City was naming theirs.

He then mentioned that the Planning Commission had voted to recommend Council deny the suspension of the short-term rental ordinance during the World Cup. If Council

did approve it, the Planning Commission wanted registration and a local contact person. Strickland said the Planning Commission mentioned that they had worked for several years on this ordinance and did not think it should be entirely suspended for two months.

Brown said the Internal Revenue Service would allow people to rent their personal residence for up to two weeks and not report the income, but many people thought they could rent their house for the whole two months without reporting. Brown thought they should educate the public about the law. Julio and Learnard said that was not the City's job.

Strickland said this was on the agenda for the February 12 meeting. Learnard said she was shocked the Planning Commission did not support a program in which the rest of the County would be participating. Strickland said Forward Fayette would have a list of homes and would share it with Peachtree City.

He then explained they had \$476,000 from deciding not to build the Pebblepocket splash pad and listed some projects that could come out of that, including the Glenloch shade structures and the LED trailer. The remaining \$227,000 could be used at the Meade playground, and he showed a concept of what it could look like.

Johnson stated that a park at the pickleball complex was something many people had asked her about. Polacek agreed and was especially enthusiastic about the LED screen. Learnard asked if they needed shade for the playground, and Strickland said it depended on the location. Holland said he could support these projects and thought the Pickleball Club might donate for shade structures. Strickland said this would come back as a budget amendment on the February 12 meeting.

Finally, they discussed the burn ordinance. Brown asked that a big drawing be displayed showing privately-owned residential properties and their size. She said 80% of the properties would not be eligible for outdoor burning. Brown thought they could allow regulated burns on the remaining properties.

Learnard noted that Council unanimously voted to ban burning because the Fire Marshal had explained it was not about fire; smoke was the hazard. Even a three-acre lot would not contain the smoke, she said. She mentioned the families that had come to Council and asked for the ban, and Brown said some of them were not city residents. Learnard noted enforcement was another issue. Brown said only 1,113 properties would qualify to burn.

Learnard repeated that this was an example of making a decision, then moving on. On the priority chart, there were 10 stickers expressing interest in single-hauler trash removal with a corollary for removing yard waste, and that was the conversation they needed to have, the Mayor stated.

Brown said it was a hardship for the largest property owners to have to dispose of their

waste without being allowed to burn it. She mentioned that burning had been allowed for many decades without problems.

Hourihan said they should just put it on the agenda and vote, but Learnard said they had already done that and banned burning unanimously. Brown said now two Council members wanted to open it up again to the largest properties.

Polacek said he was not saying he would ever be opposed to changing this, but wanted to find a solution in the meantime. He thought it was premature, only nine months after the vote, to make changes. Brown countered that many people could not deal with the yard waste themselves. She thought they put too much emphasis on smoke and not enough on their own citizens. Of those large lots, Strickland said, 61 unique addresses pulled burn permits in the past year for a total of 200 times.

Polacek said this was related to the single hauler trash collection. He said he respected that Council voted unanimously for the burn ban and wanted to give it more time. Brown said anyone who voted in favor had the right to bring it back. She thought they made the wrong decision for a small group of homeowners. Polacek said he needed to review the original presentation.

Holland suggested they let it be for awhile until they come up with another solution. Polacek agreed. Learnard said they did not need to reconsider this now. Johnson wanted to know what it would cost to provide debris disposal, but she was not in favor of rescinding the burn ordinance. Brown said she wanted to change the ordinance or suspend it until May 1 for the large properties. The decision was 4-1 not to reconsider.

The priority with the most votes was merit/COLA. Strickland said Peachtree City had previously done merit and COLA, then only COLAs, then neither. Last year, they just did a COLA. He wanted to be able to give a consistent message to staff. Last year, they awarded merit by committee. It cost money but paid off in morale and in retention. He did not want to have to look at it every year. Council determined how much would be in the pot every year, up to 3%. He just wanted to know if they would have the program or not. The amount would be decided every year.

Brown explained how salary increases worked in the Federal government. She said she did not think it was sustainable for all employees, except those who received unsatisfactory reviews, to get merit raises every year. Strickland said that was not how it worked. Only the top employees in each department would get merit raises.

Learnard said Strickland had a plan and understood how much money they could responsibly allocate. Collins pointed out that not everyone could move up to another position, and Strickland said merit pay was a way to compensate for not having a step scale. Hourihan said they should know exactly how much the merit would cost them each year.

COLA was important to keep Peachtree City competitive with other municipalities. He

was not a supporter of automatic increases for longevity, but did think outstanding performance could be recognized monetarily.

Strickland said he was asking to keep the merit program the way it was designed two years ago. The debate every year should be how much to put into merit pay. Last year they asked for 2%, which was about \$650,000. Learnard pointed out that was cut from the budget. Holland said he would be in favor of the merit program.

Hourihan said the harsh reality was that each job had value but at some point it would cap out. If someone wanted more money, they might have to look for a new job. Strickland said that was true, but he needed a way to move people across the scale.

Brown said she was trying to prevent them from blowing the budget up with 5% raises to everyone every year. Strickland told her they needed to trust him and staff that they would not let that happen. It did not have to be an ordinance, but he wanted consistency.

Johnson said she did not understand until last year that merit was exponential and not a one-time bonus. She would like to see a spreadsheet that showed what would happen in the future, even though she trusted Strickland. Strickland said he just wanted the employees to know what to expect. The Mayor thought they would keep merit with an eye on the funding.

They decided to make the requested personnel changes for the communications officers, the right-of-way crews, and the recreation workers. The court employee would start in June and would be \$23,800 for the remainder of the year. This would be on the February 12 meeting agenda.

Infrastructure was listed as a priority, and Polacek said he had thought about assessing Robinson Road for a roundabout and moving ahead on the bridge over SR 54. Hourihan put Hobby down as the coordinator of these projects. Borkowski had asked for an additional engineer, Strickland remarked.

They all wanted to investigate single-hauler trash service. Johnson said many people had their own long-time haulers and would resent government dictating who to use. Julio remarked that the City's franchise agreement had no teeth right now. The City got many complaint calls, but could not hold the haulers accountable. Johnson said she was uncomfortable telling companies they could no longer do business in Peachtree City. Polacek agreed but said it would save homeowners money. Learnard mused about implementing a zoned system.

Holland said he would like to see staff get this proposal ready and bring it to Council. Strickland offered to take it to bid and get some costs. If they did not like the bids, they did not have to do it. Strickland remarked that he could have a bid out and reviewed by May.

Julio offered to clean up the master plan for an arts program and send it to Council within a few weeks.

Learnard mentioned she had discussed naming City facilities for some of the founders for several years. M.T. Allen was the first library director and served many years. Her family would like to honor her by naming the library for her. Another founder's family had also requested commemoration. Allen's family had offered to raise money for a new sign for the library, and the other dedication should come at a nominal cost.

Polacek and Johnson were fine with this, with Johnson saying she did not want any surprise costs. Strickland offered to get a quote on re-doing the building sign. Brown did not support the library re-naming but did support the other. Holland said he was okay with both, but also wanted to see a plaque added at the new Liberty Tree. Learnard asked for a quote on that, too.

At Braelinn, they had funding for switching the tennis courts and a playground. SPLOST had \$1.2 million for playgrounds, Learnard said, and asked Strickland how they should be prioritized. Strickland said he would like to put about \$500,000 in Braelinn, and Polacek projected that Battery Way would be about \$225,000. They were not talking about the multi-use field now, and there was no money for it, but Strickland said the projected cost would be about \$1.2 million on the low end and up to \$4 million on the high end.

They agreed to move playground money out of the SPLOST funding line for Braelinn at \$500,000, Battery Way, \$250,00 and Bluesmoke, \$250,000. This would have to go to RAG. Hobby asked if RAG could go through a list of playgrounds and tot lots and decide which ones they wanted to close. They could come back with the budget for those playgrounds. Strickland said people wanted to do Braelinn and Battery Way, but they could leave Bluesmoke out and have \$450,000 remaining for RAG to work with. It could be used as a contingency fund. April was set as the deadline for the recommendations.

They were going to have to do something with the bubble at Kedron, Learnard said. There was no money allocated to fund it right now; they were counting on it being part of the facilities bond if needed. Strickland and Bush recommended paying half out of cash reserves and funding the rest with the bond.

Johnson asked if they could get out of the contract on the bubble, and Strickland said they could just pay them for the work they had done and let it go. The cost had jumped to about \$7 million and required much more work than was first thought. She wondered if they could just build a seasonal pool.

Polacek said the doubling of the pool management costs floored him. The city could take over the maintenance, but was that something they wanted to do? The schools' use of the facility was another conversation for another day.

There was a bubble that was no longer usable, Brown outlined, and they could either have an outdoor seasonal pool or put a Sprung structure over one pool and ignore the other pool. Hobby said it was more than a worn-out bubble; it was a worn-out pool. Learnard said the aquatics center and fieldhouse were built by a bond referendum, but Julio said recreation bonds had a history of failing.

Hourihan asked if they would consider a public-private partnership with the pool, but Strickland pointed out that it was connected to the fieldhouse. Brown said citizens got angry when they talked about getting rid of any City property.

The Mayor admitted they all got a surprise when they heard those costs the day before, but she heard from Borkowski that it would be a better solution than to make a new bubble over both pools. Johnson said she thought she would come around to the idea, but right now it was a lot to consider. She could not imagine not having that pool there.

Learnard said putting a second pool next to the existing pool was not that big a deal from an engineering standpoint. It was a better solution than the original plan and would also give them more open space. Layton seemed to be excited about that solution. Council's job was to find the funding. The cost was estimated at \$6 million to \$6.5 million. In the future there might be a county-wide natatorium, but they were tasked to find the right solution now.

Hobby suggested they complete the design on C-2 and come back with more information. Polacek said he wanted to prioritize Peachtree City residents, and Hobby again said they would be closed a year and could re-examine fees and schedules when they re-opened.

Could a multi-purpose field go on the facilities authority bond? Learnard asked, and Strickland said it could. Learnard suggested it be added to the bond in its entire amount. She would be okay with taking half of the money for Kedron out of the reserves and putting half on the bond.

Strickland said he would ask Council for a resolution of intent to finance when the first project came before them and put all the projects on there with an estimate of how much they would borrow. It did not commit them to borrowing immediately. They planned to pay for everything in cash, then take out the bond to reimburse themselves. The total for all the projects would be \$15 million, and they would pay half with the bond and the other half with the reserves, Strickland remarked. That would take the reserves down to about \$23 million. He said fund balance and reserves were different. Fund balance was not all cash. He said that would keep the reserves within their policy.

Would it hurt them to reduce the reserves all at once? Brown asked. Strickland said a split like this should not hurt them. Johnson said if they were comfortable, then she was, too.

Julio listed the numbers for the personnel changes they had discussed. Court clerk

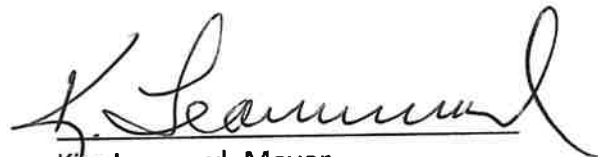
would be \$23,890 for the rest of the year starting in June; communications, starting in March, \$49,102; planning clerk starting in March, \$6,524; three maintenance techs, starting in March, \$121,190. However, \$100,000 would be moved from the amount budgeted for temporary labor. Julio mentioned that they budgeted \$76,000 for the election that did not get used. She wanted to use \$18,000 from that for AI chat in all departments.

Learnard asked if anyone objected to Johnson getting started with the youth council? Johnson had a list of what she would need and what she hoped they could do, and said she could talk about it more at a future Council meeting. They all agreed this would be a good idea and supported this project. There should be a small budget of maybe \$5,000.

Johnson also wanted to discuss dividing the travel and training budget for Council. There was \$24,500 budgeted for all of Council. Johnson asked if they wanted to allot each member a certain amount and, if they went over, Council would have to approve the expenditure. Polacek said this would be a good budget conversation for next year.

There being no further business, the retreat adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary


Kim Learnard, Mayor