City Council of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 9, 2026
6:30 PM

Call to Order

The Mayor and Council of Peachtree City met in regular session on Thursday, July 9, 2026. Mayor Kim Learnard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Council members attending: Laura Johnson, Suzanne Brown, Clinton Holland, and Michael Polacek.

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Announcements, Awards, Special Recognition

A. Presentation of 4th of July Parade winners

- **Grand Marshal's Trophy - Dirty South Strength & Conditioning**
- **Mayor's Trophy - PTC Hockey**
- **Most Creative - Air Heat America**
- **Most Patriotic - Better Way Ministries**
- **Spirit of Peachtree City - Peachtree City Dog Park**

The Mayor said she thought everyone would agree that the July 4th celebration was the best ever, and she thanked City staff for their months of work in making it possible.

Public Comment

Learnard explained that she would allow time for public comments on solid waste collection when it came up on the agenda as a discussion item. She asked anyone wishing to comment on that to wait until after the presentation.

Paul Schultz thanked Police and Code Enforcement for their enhanced efforts to enforce regulations on the paths regarding illegal vehicles. He specifically mentioned e-motos, the performance electric motorcycles that should be registered and driven only on the streets by licensed drivers. Schultz asked for enforcement of the 50-inch cart width requirements, explaining that the paths were 120 inches wide, leaving little room for wider carts to pass. He was concerned that this would be unsafe, especially for inexperienced and elderly drivers.

James Clifton stated that Peachtree City currently limited choice on trash providers to three companies, and he thought an ordinance that would reduce the option to one provider and require every household to pay for this service regardless of need represented an unnecessary expansion of government authority.

He then talked about annexations, intimating that a plan to annex land in Coweta County started in January with secret meetings in Kennesaw. He said the Fayette

County Development Authority president presented information about data centers and encouraged Peachtree City to annex property adjacent to Falcon Field Airport. Clifton remarked that the Mayor asked twice during the meeting how City Council could move the conversation forward. Two days after the meetings, Clifton said the City Council agreed to the annexation study that would be presented later that night. He said he hoped Council would hear the voice of the citizens and that there were no plans to annex property that would include a data center.

Clifton also reported that the Council retreat scheduled for August had been canceled. He then read from the Declaration of Independence, reminding Council that their powers derived from the consent of the governed and that one of the rebels' grievances with the King was that he had had called legislative bodies together at locations far from their seat of power.

Agenda Changes

Minutes

Holland moved to approve the June 18, 2026 City Council meeting minutes, the June 18, 2026 Executive Session minutes, and the June 22, 2026 Special Called Work Session minutes. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

A. June 18, 2026 City Council Meeting Minutes
APPROVED 5-0

B. June 18, 2026 Executive Session Minutes
APPROVED 5-0

C. June 22, 2026 Special Called Work Session
APPROVED 5-0

Consent Agenda

A. Ordinance #1261 Reorganization and Dissolution of the Engineering Services Division

Holland moved to approve Consent Agenda item A. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion Items

A. RFP Exclusive Solid Waste Management Collection and Related Services

The Mayor explained that this topic came up during Council's January retreat, and Council felt it was worthy of exploration and discussion.

Interim Assistant City Manager Jonathan Miller said he would start with an overview of the request for proposal (RFP), then explain the evaluation criteria, summarize the proposal evaluations, and compare costs. He said the purpose of the RFP was to select a single qualified contractor to provide exclusive residential solid waste, recycling, yard debris, and related pickup services to approximately 13,700 households in Peachtree City. The RFP outlined an initial contract term of one year beginning October 1, 2026, with annual renewals of up to five years based on satisfactory performance.

The primary goals included reliability, consistent service, predictable pricing, and environmental responsibility. Key performance standards listed in the RFP included 99% route completion, with routes not completed within 24 hours of the scheduled service day listed as a service failure. Missed pickups must be corrected within one business day. The RFP's also included customer service standards: all calls had to answered within 30 seconds, and the call abandonment rate could not exceed 5%. Complaints had to be acknowledged within one business day and resolved in two business days.

Stipulations regarding technology, Miller listed, included having a GPS-equipped fleet with onboard cameras and route verification. The waste hauler would submit monthly reports that included information on route completion, customer complaints, response times, collection tonnage, safety incidents, customer property damage, and non-payments.

Miller said they collaborated with Keep Peachtree City Beautiful (KPTCB) to come up with the recycling requirements for the RFP. They were asking that weekly curbside recycling collection be included in the base monthly rate. This would be available to every residence, but participation was optional. Each residence would get one new recycling cart provided by the contractor. There would be separate collection vehicles for recycling, and contamination rates with other trash would be monitored and included in a monthly recycling report. The report would also contain information on the total recycling tonnage and participation rates.

The RFP also included liquidation damages, which Miller stated would encourage consistent service. Violations included missed pickups, with fines getting steeper for uncorrected missed pickups and repeated missed pickups, along with uncompleted routes. Uncleaned spills or leaks, failure to respond to complaints, and late or incomplete monthly reports also would carry a financial penalty for the contractor.

The RFP asked the waste haulers to look at three options. Option 1 was just the base service, which included weekly curbside trash collection in a new 96-gallon container and weekly recycling collection. Option 2 had all the features of the first option, plus bi-weekly collection of yard debris in a 96-gallon yard debris cart. Option 3 would be full service with all the features of Option 2, along with on-call bulk waste collection initiated by the resident with a three- to five-day response time. It would be up to the contractor to set limits of acceptable materials and service limits.

Moving on the evaluation criteria, Miller explained that cost carried a weight of 30%, but first, the evaluators looked at the company's operational approach, experience, qualifications and references, customer service and reporting, fleet, staffing and continuity of service, recycling performance and compliance, along with contract exceptions and risk allocation.

Six companies responded to the RFP: Amwaste, GFL, Ryland, Red Oak, Waste Pro, and Republic Services. Miller explained that no one on the evaluation team was aware of the prices; the evaluations were based on the other factors, such as operational approach and experience, which influenced how well they would provide services. The Purchasing Manager added the costs after all evaluations were completed.

Amwaste was at the top for Option 1, but Miller pointed out that Amwaste, GFL, and Republic were very close in all factors except cost. Option 2 had almost the same results, but Miller noted that Red Oak and Ryland were the lowest cost. Option 3 was also very similar.

Looking at costs, Miller showed that Amwaste, GFL, and Republic were the top ranked. He showed the quarterly costs for each option from each of those companies. For Option 1, Amwaste's cost was $63.45 per quarter, Republic was $89.40, and GFL was $82.50. Amwaste was $75 for Option 2, while Republic was $103.92, and GFL was $99. Option 3 had Amwaste at $85.56 per quarter, with Republic at $111.45, and GFL at $115.50.

The RFP also asked about pricing for some additional services. Miller said Republic and GFL both charged for backdoor service for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or medical need, while Amwaste did not. Neither Republic nor Amwaste charged for Christmas tree collection, while GFL charged $25. Amwaste included cart replacement at no cost, while Republic and GFL imposed a fee.

Bulk waste pickup when added to Option 1 or 2 was something else they asked about, and Miller reported that Amwaste's fee was $175, while Republic and GFL were both $75. The companies were also asked what they would charge to facilitate the City's annual spring cleanup, and Amwaste said they could do it at no cost. Republic was $38.50, and GFL was $100 a haul and $55 a ton.

Miller mentioned some other considerations. If backdoor service was not medically required, customers could still get backdoor service from Amwaste for $75 per month. Neither Republic nor GFL offered this premium service if there was not a medical need. He also pointed out that all three providers were willing to provide bulk pickup as a regular bi-weekly route if Option 3 was chosen. Amwaste owned and operated the material recovery facility used by KPTCB, and Director Al Yougel had been pleased with their performance.

Republic asked for a few minor contract exceptions, including having all phone calls answered in less than 90 seconds instead of 30 and an 8% or lower call abandonment rate instead of 5%.

KPTCB had asked citizens visiting the recycling center about their current service. Of the 191 responses, the average quarterly cost was $73.11 for Pollard, $88.23 for Republic, and $97.71 for GFL. Miller pointed out that Amwaste's cost for Option 1 was $63 per quarter, and 93% of those surveyed were paying more than that. Also, 56% were paying more than the $86 per quarter that Amwaste would charge for the full service offered in Option 3.

Miller asked if Council had any questions. Learnard stated that she paid $87 per quarter to Republic. With Amwaste's full service Option 3, that bill would go to $85.56 per quarter, but her every other week recycling would go to every week and yard debris could be picked up every other week at no extra charge, along with any bulk items.

She also verified with Miller that, currently, citizens could choose from a list of three City-approved haulers, and he said that was correct. She then mentioned that an impetus for this discussion was that about one out of 10 Peachtree City households did not contract with any of those haulers. They knew this because the haulers paid KPTCB a franchise fee for each household they serviced, and those revenues didn't balance with the number of households in the city.

Learnard remarked that no one produced zero trash, and Miller stated that Yougel often talked about how much household trash they emptied from the containers along the paths.

Holland was glad they had mentioned the large number of households without garbage service and what often happened with that trash. He remarked that taxpayers were footing those people's costs through the $1 a month franchise fee. Holland was glad that this proposal required participation from every household, and Miller elaborated that Council would choose one of the three options, and that would apply to everyone.

The RFP process had been honest, and staff had figured out the best way to evaluate the companies, Holland continued, concluding that it showed Amwaste as having the best proposal. He thought it would be good to have one hauler to be responsible for all waste collection in Peachtree City.

Polacek thanked Miller and staff for their work, noting that this was the first time Council had see this information. He verified that Amwaste owned and operated its own recycling facility, and Miller said he believed the other companies used that facility, as well. It would be a plus when getting the required reports if Amwaste owned the facility, he remarked.

Yard debris pickup was one of the topics that spurred him to run for office last year, Polacek stated, because after the burn ban was adopted, there were no alternatives for yard waste. So now, they were seeing yard debris dumped on the greenbelts, in addition to the trash in containers from people who were not under an agreement with a waste hauler.

Polacek said in the previous city he lived in, residents had to bag yard debris, but here he saw that the haulers would provide 96-gallon carts. He asked about a 50% cost he saw in Amwaste's proposal, but Miller said that cost was for an extra trash can, not a yard debris can. There was no additional cost for one yard debris can, but Miller said other yard waste collection details would be something they would have to work out with the hauler. He believed all the vendors were open to options regarding yard debris, and Polacek said he was glad to hear that because it seemed that residents wanted that service but had questions about how it would be accomplished.

He asked about Amwaste's performance in other cities. Miller replied that references were part of the RFP and recalled that Amwaste serviced the City of Newnan but could not remember other cities. He said Amwaste, GFL, and Republic were all prepared to serve Peachtree City, and that is what the evaluators looked at. The difference between a bid and an RFP, Miller explained, was that with a bid you were looking for the lowest price. An RFP considered a lot of things because it was a huge undertaking, and cost was the final thing considered. The execution of the service was most importance.

This service would be between the household and the vendor, Polacek remarked, asking if he was correct in thinking there would be no administrative costs to the City. That was partially correct, Miller replied. The City would not do the billing, but Cinnamon Mack in the Public Works Department currently handled issues from citizens and would continue to do so if citizens contacted them. However, she would be dealing with just one provider instead of three. All three of the top vendor candidates had agreed to provide a portal that the City could access to get information about pickups and so on.

Johnson said she could see both sides of this issue. She asked how long the price would be good for, and Miller said the RFP provided for an annual adjustment factor based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) fuel index, capped at 3%. They asked all six vendors if there was any way they could lock in the first-year price and hold that rate without escalation for the full five-year term? If not, what was the lowest maximum price increase they could commit to?

Amway pledged to hold their price for the first three years unless fuel jumped to more than $5.50 a gallon, at which point they would add a fuel surcharge. For years four and five, they would use the calculations from the RFP up to a maximum of 3%. Republic said the adjustment rate would be 3.5%, although the RFP capped it at 3%. GFL could not commit to five years but would work with the City to establish a predictable reasonable escalation. Red Oak said they could hold their rate for the first two years and would cap the increases at 2% for years three, four, and five. Ryland said no to five years and suggested a 5% cap for years two through five, while WastePro agreed to the 3% in the RFP.

Johnson said that was good to know because many people had problems with unexpected price increases with their current haulers. She was glad there would be a system where residents could anticipate any price increases.

Some residents were concerned that they would have to pay a penalty when they cancelled services with their current hauler, Johnson remarked, but City Attorney Ted Meeker said the supplemental powers clause of the Georgia Constitution allowed the City to provide waste services. The cases that had interpreted that provision, along with the Solid Waste Act, allowed cities and counties to dictate a sole provider. Johnson verified that meant if a resident had a contract with a company, that company could not make the person pay a penalty, and Meeker confirmed that was correct because the company no longer had the authority to do the business in the city.

She asked Miller how things like the time to answer phone calls would be tracked, and he said that information would be in the monthly reports. Johnson then wanted to know if yard debris would go to Peachtree City's compost site, and Miller said it would go to wherever the company chose but the City compost site would remain open for Peachtree City citizens.

She also wondered about the yard debris container, and Miller said those small details would have to be ironed out with the contractor. However, Johnson pointed out that no part of this was going to seem small to the citizens, and she felt they would certainly have some opinions.

Johnson mentioned the case of one resident who owned a business with a dumpster where she took her residential trash. Why should she have to pay for residential service when she did not use it? Miller said there was no way for anyone to opt out now, but that was a decision Council could make. Johnson also mentioned that an ordinance change was going to be needed because residential waste pickup was not required currently, and Miller agreed.

Pollard was one of the current three approved providers, and Johnson wondered why they did not respond to the RFP. Miller said he did not know, and the City did not reach out to them to ask why. He noted that Pollard had not responded when this had come up in the past. Meeker then said he was friends with Pollard's owner and he had told him he did not want to take on the upfront costs of getting the equipment to serve so many customers. Johnson said that was one of her hesitations—Amwaste was not currently a provider in Peachtree City, and no one had a relationship with them. She added that she was interested to hear the questions and comments from citizens.

Suzanne Brown also had question about how landscape debris would be collected, and Miller again said no contract had been written, but all the haulers were open to either bagging or providing a dedicated container. The RFP called for the cart, but that could be changed as Council chose. They could use a cart for disposal of what would fit, with limbs set to the side, or they could specify that yard waste be bagged.

Brown said leaves could not be picked up with a claw truck; they would need a truck that could suck up the leaves. Miller said he did not believe any of these providers had that capability. Brown reflected on her service in Florida, where landscape debris placed in a trash can was collected, but if it was bagged, it had to be in a paper yard waste bag. She said that could get expensive and was a lot of work.

How would collections be handled for someone who had a large lot and a lot of tree debris, for instance, if an entire tree was down? Miller remarked that it probably would not be put on the curb, and Holland asked if they could cut it into four-foot lengths. Miller said he believed they preferred five-foot lengths but diameter would play a role. He said there would have to be a limit on the size, but he did not know the details.

Brown asked if they had discussed the haulers going onto the property with a claw truck. Miller said his guess was that no hauler would be willing to do that for liability reasons. Brown remarked that they had banned burning of yard debris, and she was looking at this proposal as a way to help with debris disposal for people with large lots and lots of trees. Miller again said they had not asked those questions but said they could. Strickland said once they had narrowed it down to one company, they could meet with them and ask these questions.

Brown asked what items would and would not be accepted for recycling. Miller responded that Amwaste accepted everything that was taken now—plastics 1 and 2, paper, cardboard, aluminum, and other metals. No glass and Styrofoam, Brown remarked. Brown said she thought that would relieve the burden on the City recycling center.

The Mayor asked if any citizens would like to comment, telling them they had four minutes each.

Randy Hough stepped up first. He told Council he had a large estate lot on Spear Road. That road had no curbs, so things could not be brought to curbside. He and two other houses shared an 800-foot long driveway.

He said it would be a misjudgment to think there was a one size fits all solution. He scoffed at the notion of a 16-gallon yard waste container, saying he had 16 tons of tree debris that needed to be removed. In the past he had burned that debris but now that was illegal. What should he do? The RFP did not cover that kind of yard waste, just like Council did not think of these large lots when they adopted the burn ban, Hough remarked.

Hough said he was dismayed that he was having to address Council about this again. He said a claw truck could not come up his driveway, and he asked Council to consider his situation and that of others with large lots. Hough said several Council members had visited him to see the situation, and the others were welcome.

Strickland said he wanted to make it clear that Miller put his RFP out at the request of Council. Learnard asked the citizens to remember that, saying it was a Council issue.

This was another instance of a government entity taking away choice, Jane Trammell commented, and she said that rarely worked out well. She wanted to choose her trash hauler in a competitive market. She also mentioned that going down to one company would put people out of work.

Valerie Alexander went back to Johnson's statement that Amwaste was unfamiliar to Peachtree City residents, and she wondered if they could go back to the other top contenders and ask if they could match Amwaste's offer. She also said she was not clear if citizens could choose their option for the level of service or if Council would do that. She mentioned that damage to roads and the environmental impact of three sets of trucks each week was a factor to consider and wanted to see that mentioned in the discussion.

Strickland said they could not rebid this at this point. They had already gone back and asked for the best and final proposal, but once companies knew each other's prices, the competitive edge was lost. He then told Alexander that Council would select the option that everyone in the city would use.

Strickland said they broke down the road wear and tear and the environmental impact of having three companies during the last presentation on this in 2019, and that did not seem to matter to the citizens. Citizens seemed mostly to care about the price, so this time they focused on how to save citizens money. He said they were looking to solve the major problems of people who did not have trash service and were using the City's containers and also of those who dumped their yard debris along the greenbelts. Another issue was the burn ban and how they could help people dispose of landscape debris.

Alexander said she understood the cost of paving the roads more frequently was a somewhat hidden cost, but she felt people should understand that it was a factor. She said there was value in discussing the cost of destroying the environment.

Brown then said she had run the numbers, and 52 trash trucks and 26 recycling trucks a year totaled 78 trucks per company, times three, to equal 234 trucks along a residential street. If they went to a single hauler, there could be 182 trips through the neighborhood for trash, recycling, and yard waste, a traffic reduction of about 22%, and, while it should not be the overarching factor, that was significant enough to warrant attention. Alexander pointed out that they were reducing the truck traffic while adding the valuable service of collecting yard waste and bulk waste.

Al Phelps said this might lower the number of garbage trucks through a neighborhood but what about the ever-increasing number of delivery trucks? He also cautioned Council about simply going with the hauler that offered the lowest price, saying that was not always the best answer. He said the City had a history of making mistakes and having to return to projects to correct mistakes. Phelps suggested, too, that the company selected could raise their price without notice and put the City in a bind.

Strickland asked to respond. He said the things they were having to go back and fix were decisions made by a previous City Manager and a previous Council. He agreed that lowest price was not always best, and Miller pointed out that Amwaste was not the lowest bidder of the six. Strickland said Amwaste was the lowest among the top three of Amwaste, GFL, and Republic.

Also, the RFP had addressed the issue of price increases. Miller said Amwaste had committed to holding its price for three years, and it would be written into the contract. If a company insisted on raising the price, Strickland said he had no problem telling them they would no longer be doing business with the City.

Phelps asked what would happen to people who refused to pay for this service. If they changed the ordinance to require payment for trash pickup and people refused, the City could cite them for every day they were in violation, eventually winding up in Municipal Court.

Chandra Wright was interested in the possibility of expanding the types of things that could be recycled. She also wanted to know how these companies disposed of recycling waste.

Miller suggested Council invite Amwaste in for a presentation on recycling. He again said Amwaste would take what was currently collected in the City, but there was no market for Styrofoam or glass. Amwaste owned and operated their own recycling center and could give Council more details.

The Mayor said this was a big decision, and she thought it would be a great idea to have at least one vendor come in for a presentation. There were meetings on August 6 and 20 where this could be arranged.

Paul Schultz said he paid $59 a quarter for his home's garbage service in February 2023 and had seen a 49% increase since then for the same services. He liked the idea of the City being able to negotiate a contract that would limit cost increases.

Meeker said other cities that had done this typically had a year to year agreement and automatic increases were based on CPI.

Another citizen wondered why the two issues of choosing one service provider and making it mandatory were lumped together. Strickland said they were able to get the lowest price by bidding out the entire City. They were making it mandatory as a way to solve the issue of dumping on the paths.

Learnard asked why they did not just make it mandatory. Strickland said that came back to getting the best price, and also that it would be easier for the City to not have to deal with three companies. Right now, those companies were not answerable to the City, but if there was one contracted provider, the City could do competitive negotiations and enforce what they needed to with the company. However, it was Council's decision whether or not to mandate service.

One final citizen said it was up to consumers to negotiate the best price for their service. He felt there must be something in this proposal for the City because he did not believe the number of trucks was a concern. He asked how many jobs in City government would be created to track the data that would be collected.

There would be no jobs created, Strickland responded. The company would compile the data and send the reports to the City. Miller said Mack would review the reports. If there was an enforcement piece, Code Enforcement would get involved. City employees would be involved, he continued, but there would be no job creation. Right now, they were getting reports from the three providers, so having one provider would be less work. Strickland said his goal as City Manager was to never do anything ineffectively or inefficiently. He said this was the best staff he had ever worked with, and none of the directors and chiefs wasted money.

To answer the question of why they were doing this, Strickland went on, they were asked to by Council. Learnard said the impetus for her was the number of trucks she saw on her street. Also, there was the fact that probably 10% of the residents were dropping their household trash into the blue bins along the paths and in the parks. They looked at 14 similar communities and found that 11 had some kind of municipal program. Of the three that did not, two had a burn ban. She said it helped her to know it was not anomalous to have a municipal service. It offered improved services at a reduced price, and Learnard said she thought it was worth considering. They would not be making a decision that night, and she said she wanted to get some of the questions answered and hear from Amwaste.

During his campaign last fall, Polacek said he found that many citizens were enthusiastic about the idea of yard waste pickup.

Holland said the number of trucks was an issue for him. He felt this was a quality of life issue in a growing city. The paths did not need to be a dump site. He commended staff for the time and efforts put towards this RFP. Holland agreed that large debris was a problem and hoped the companies could address this. He said he felt everyone should embrace the idea of getting more services for less money.

Brown stated that she voted in favor of the burn ban and had regretted it every day since. She thought they should provide something for the people with one acre or larger lots so they did not wind up stockpiling debris and creating a fire danger. She said she saw both advantages and disadvantages with this plan.

Johnson acknowledged this issue had not been a priority for her. She said Council worked as a majority, and she respected all of their opinions and ideas. Johnson remarked that most of the citizens she had talked to were greatly in favor of this, although she understood there would be some loud voices in disagreement. Council's job was to listen to everybody and then make a decision for the best of the entire community.

Good leaders could go back and reconsider decisions made in the past, such as the burn ban, Johnson stated, although she liked to have something in place for a period of time. They might want to go back and have another conversation.

Strickland asked how Council wanted to proceed, and Learnard said they wanted to continue the conversation and bring in Amwaste to answer questions that had arisen, such as their record in other communities, how yard debris would be collected, and the level of options offered. Strickland suggested scheduling Amwaste for the August 6 work session. There would be no vote at that meeting, just the discussion with Amwaste, he said.

B. Annexation Study Draft

Since 2023, Strickland related, Council had been discussing the need for an annexation study. A study had not been conducted since 2014, so it was past time to look at their borders and see what annexation in some key areas could look like. He then introduced Geoff Koski and Trevor Butler of KB Advisory Group, the firm that was handling the annexation study, to summarize the first draft of the feasibility study. Strickland said there would be an open house, probably the next week, for the public to come out and ask questions and comment on the study.

Koski first made it clear that this was an interim update. They wanted to incorporate the citizens' viewpoints that they would get during the open house. The study was based on an analysis of the City's budget and land uses to determine service costs for residential versus commercial uses. KB then applied those costs to potential annexation areas.

He displayed a map showing the current City boundaries, plus the boundaries of Fayetteville, Senoia, and Tyrone. The map also showed large areas that could be candidates for annexation into Peachtree City. Koski made sure to emphasize that none of these areas were in Coweta County, saying they were instructed to look only at land inside Fayette County.

The City ordered this study to look at commercial opportunities, Koski stated. Commercial and industrial growth created jobs and brought in revenue, while residential growth created more burden on services than was covered by taxes they paid. Some of the areas they had considered had a lot of residential properties, he stated, and if the City annexed them, they might want to change the zoning in order not to lose money.

However, the area along SR 54 between Fayetteville and Peachtree City was already largely commercial. They might want to consider annexing the other areas, but the fiscal benefit would not be as great. As of now, Koski stated, there did not seem to be compelling reasons for Peachtree City to proactively annex any of these large swaths of land, but there could be parcels within those areas that would be worth considering. That would be addressed in the final report.

Butler took over to discuss the areas they had investigated. Area 1A was the corridor on SR 54 between Fayetteville and Peachtree City, and Butler said annexation might be in Peachtree City's interest in order to control land use and design guidelines to create a gateway between the two cities. This area was primarily residential, Butler noted, so this was where the trimming that Koski had referenced might play a role. They might want to stick to annexing only a narrow area along the highway.

Area 1B had Ebenezer Road as the eastern boundary. It contained several large parcels that might not be too challenging to put together for industrial development, Butler remarked. It was a heavily residential area now, but Butler said the character might change upon annexation, with Koski adding that the changeover might take decades, so they would not recommend annexation immediately.

Another largely residential area, ranked as 1C, was south of the City, and Butler said they had heard there was some industrial/commercial interest in larger properties there.

He moved on to Area 2, which contained Starr's Mill High School and already seemed like part of Peachtree City. Butler pointed out that some large parcels to the east might have potential for industrial or commercial development in the future.

Area 3 was north of the City and was heavily residential. Most of the parcels along Dogwood Trail were quite long, he stated, and could be challenging to develop, making this the longest range annexation of all the properties they had considered. This was a good example of why they consulted with Fire and Police, Koski noted, because they had learned there was no easy route from the main part of the city to this area. This, too, was an area they would not recommend.

Koski said he did not feel any of these areas were compelling to annex in their entirety. The area along SR 54 was promising but needed to be trimmed. That was something they wanted to talk about with the public at the open house. Koski told Council he wanted to come back in August with a fully-developed report as the final recommendation.

Learnard thanked him. Holland said he liked the ratings and basically agreed with them. Brown asked Koski if he could show how the zonings within each of these swaths, and he said he would add that information.

This study was much-needed, Johnson said, noting it had been 12 years since the last one, and Polacek noted these studies were recommended to be done every five years. He mused on Fayetteville's growth to the west over the past decade, remarking that Peachtree City had to be thinking about how to preserve its borders.

Learnard said this was a wonderful start, and she was looking forward to the open house with the public. Strickland added that the process was going as anticipated, and KB had been great with work with.

Old Agenda Items

New Agenda Items

A. 07-26-01 Continuation of Deer Management Program

Miller explained that there were a lot of consequences when the deer population became larger than could be sustained, among them vehicle/deer collisions, landscape damage, and the spread of tick-borne diseases. There had been more than 200 reported deer collisions in Peachtree City since 2022, with nine occurring at the intersection of Interlochen and Peachtree Parkway. Fayette County ranked second in Georgia with 514 deer-related crashes per year.

He listed some of the outcomes from last year's controlled hunting program. Sixteen deer were tagged, 15 of which were does. Miller said that initial hunt was considered a success because the goal was to remove does from the population. That number aligned with the herd management expectations set by Seekin' Whitetails wildlife consultants.

After the season ended, staff conducted a review to identify possible areas for improvement, including establishing new hunting zones and acreage for program expansion. They decided it was worthwhile to ask Council to continue this program into the 2026-27 hunting season. Miller and Recreation Director Harold Layton were working on establishing new areas, and Miller said they had approached the Georgia Wildlife Commission about issuing special tags for Peachtree City. This could encourage hunters to do more hunting in Peachtree City because it would not count against the tags on their own licenses, he explained.

Right now, the continuation from Council was needed so they could go ahead and set up the lottery for hunters before the season started in September.

Brown asked if there was a need for city tags. She said the State allowed a hunter to take up to 12 deer--10 does and two antlered. Was there a need for more? Miller said he did not know, but they looked at a city tag as an incentive because what they got in Peachtree City would not count against what they took in other areas. Hunters might be more willing to take a smaller deer in Peachtree City if it did not count against their tags. Miller said they were also looking to create relationships with processors in the area because the hunters would not want to keep all of what they took. Brown said she was in favor of anything that encouraged them to take more deer.

She hoped they could start on opening day, Sept. 12, because, based on last year's weather pattern, those weeks were dry. Rainy weather had set in by the time Peachtree City opened its hunt. Miller said they should have no issue starting earlier if they could go ahead and start with the application process. Brown went on to say there were no accidents last year. She also wanted them to take advantage of the entire calendar and not take a break in the middle of hunting season.

Brown asked where they were looking to expand, and Miller said Layton was eyeing areas in the north part of the city but had to ensure those areas were adequately sized for hunting. Brown mentioned that she had suggested opening up City-owned greenbelts that abutted private property for hunting if the property owner agreed. Miller said they could look into it, and Brown commented that going 50 to 100 feet into a greenbelt would be a significant addition. She said a property owner would need to apply for a permit, and the City would have to make sure the area was suitable for hunting.

Brown suggested creating a registry of property owners who would be willing to open up their property to hunting. That way, they could connect those owners of larger lots with hunters. She asked Miller to look into that.

Learnard and Johnson said they were in favor of continuing the program, as did Holland, who said he liked the idea of connecting property owners and hunters. Learnard suggested a Facebook page be created to connect hunters and owners, and the City wouldn't have to get involved. Brown said she would look into that.

Brown moved to approve New Agenda item 07-26-01, continuation of deer management program for the archery season commencing on Sept. 12, 2026 and running through January 31, 2027. Polacek seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

B. 07-26-02 Fire Station 85 – Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) Approval of Guaranteed Maximum Price

Fire Chief Clint Murphy said this was a big step for this project—the presentation of the guaranteed maximum price. He introduced Project Manager Tim Symonds of Morgan Mill Consulting to go over the details. Symonds said MEJA Construction, the construction manager at risk, had set the maximum price at $7,981,687.

Council approved MEJA's appointment at the April 16 meeting, and since then, they had been talking with their subcontractors to get the best prices and conducting a constructability review on the design. The award in April to Meja was $422,500 for their general conditions and general requirements, plus overhead and profit fee. This would be change order number 1 to the $7.9 million, Symonds stated.

If Council gave their approval, Symonds said the groundbreaking would be in August, and the station should be operational by the end of June, 2027.

Holland moved to approve New Agenda item 07-26-02, Fire Station 85, construction manager at risk guaranteed maximum price of $7,981,687. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The Mayor called for a short break at 8:55 p.m. and the meeting resumed at 9:02 p.m.

Public Hearings

A. 07-26-03 Fiscal Year 2027 Operating & Capital Improvement Budget

Strickland he would be presenting some of the same information that he did during the budget workshop session in June. He started with a look at market trends that showed the Consumer Price Index (CPI) had jumped 27% since COVID and what would have cost $76 in 2020 would cost $100 today. The cost of labor was another big factor in the budget. The average earnings of a worker in the United States rose by about 25% from 2009 to 2020. Since 2020, earnings had jumped an additional 25%. Because of this, the City had to raise compensation to employees in order to recruit and retain them.

He also included a graph that showed a citizen to employee ratio of 8.82. The population was estimated at about 42,000, and this ratio was within the recommended range. The population of Peachtree City had grown about 25% since 2000, he stated, so they were not adding employees without need.

The changes in State law could impact how the City obtained revenue. House Bill 581, passed two years ago, provided a statewide floating homestead exemption and controlled how much the assessed value of a home could increase over its value in 2024. The increase was tied to the rate of inflation, so for 2026 it was capped at 2.7%. Non-homesteaded properties would continue to be valued at fair market.

Senate Bill 33, passed in this year's legislative session, allowed counties to adopt a 1% Local Homestead Option Sales Tax (LHOST) to provide property tax relief for homesteaded properties. It would not expand revenue but would substitute the sales tax revenues for the money lost due to homestead property tax relief. Adopting this would require a local act of the General Assembly, which Council had approved, followed by a voter referendum.

If approved, the LHOST would be in effect for 10 years. Distribution would be automatically calculated each year based on the homesteaded digest, with the previous year's sales tax collection determining the current year's homestead exemption. Any excess sales tax collections beyond 100% of the homestead exemption would be used to lower taxes on all properties.

A distinction from the Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) that was part of HB 581 was that FLOST reduced property taxes for all properties, while LHOST reduced taxes only for homestead properties. Strickland said he was a big fan of LHOST and thought it would provide substantial tax relief to homesteaded properties. Based on estimates of the homestead digest and what they could possibly collect on an LHOST, Peachtree City would be very close to 100% homestead exemption, probably 80% or higher, Strickland stated. He said he hoped the State would keep it in place during the next legislative session. The soonest they could collect the LHOST would be January 1, 2028, so the tax relief would not be seen until the tax bills went out later that year.

Holland asked when this would be on the ballot, and Strickland said it could be 2027 if the local legislation was approved in next year's General Assembly session.

The original budget for FY 26 was $57.9 million but projected revenue looked like they would total $59.3 million with expenditures at $62.3 million, leaving a fund balance deficit of $2.9 million, which would be used to purchase of the MEJA property that they would close on the next week.

They had budgeted $60.8 million in General Fund revenues for fiscal year 2027, with a projected fund balance of 57.2%. Later, Strickland said he would show how they planned to reduce the fund balance.

He said they were recommending a flat millage rate after having rollbacks the previous two years. The tax digest should grow by 3.36%, and homesteads were capped at 2.7% increases. Strickland noted that reassessments were no longer increasing at the rates seen over the years since the pandemic. The estimated total property tax revenues were $24.6 million, up $969,000 over FY 26. He noted that property taxes as a percent of revenue had decreased by 1%, which meant that other revenue sources were growing faster than property taxes, which Strickland said was a good thing.

Staff budgeted for a 3% increase in Local Option Sales Tax Collections (LOST), which was low. He said LOST and SPLOST were not growing as fast as they usually did. They also had budgeted for a decrease in interest income because they had spent the remainder of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

A pie chart showed that 44% of the FY 27 General Fund revenue sources came from ad valorem taxes and about 22% from LOST, with the remainder coming from other sources, such as franchise taxes, charges for services, licenses, and fines and forfeitures, which Finance Director Kelly Bush had outlined at the workshop.

Another chart showed that the millage rate had dropped by 1.338 mills over the past 13 years, going from 7.178 mills in 2012 to 5.840 mills in 2025. In one year, that 1.338 mills amounted to $5,650,795, Bush pointed out. This reduction saved the average Peachtree City household $273.

Strickland listed the expenses that caused the increase in the budget this year:

- 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA)
- 2% increase in technology costs
- Three new firefighter positions, the last that would be needed to staff Station 85
- Three other new positions in Planning, Police, and Fire
- Two new part-time positions for the Youth Council and the Public Arts Group
- 2027 Comprehensive Plan
- Ongoing competition for labor
- Increased utility costs, which they were looking into
- Increased healthcare costs

Strickland pointed out that there were many lines in the budget that had decreased.

Police and Fire made up a little under 50% of the entire budget. With the addition of Public Works and Recreation, it went up to 75%. Breaking down expenditures by department showed that 66% of spending was for personnel, either with salaries or other costs, such as healthcare. Purchased contractual service was the next biggest category at 20%.

The General Fund Budget Summary showed revenues and expenditures balancing at S60,779,253.

Bush first presented the five-year financial model without a bond, saying there was another version that included a facilities authority bond and the use of $6 million from reserves for the renovations for the Police headquarters. This version had them reaching 62% into fund balance for the next five years, she said.

The next model showed them taking $6 million from reserves to supplement a grant from the Department of Homeland Security for Police and Emergency Services upgrades. Police upgrades would be at the gun range and the current Police building. Police and Fire administration would be housed in the MEJA building. The gun range would be used as a training center, and the current PD building would be renovated to provide more room for evidence storage and be better suited for patrol and detective operations.

They also wanted to look at a $12 million, 15-year bond to fund construction of a permanent structure over the Kedron pools, a multi-purpose field at Braelinn, and probably one other project. That payment would be about $1 million a year, reducing the fund balance down to about 46%, which would remain steady over the next five years. No millage rate increase would be required due to growth of other revenue funds.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fund projects totaled $1,416,491. Strickland pointed out that they purchased equipment and vehicles on a five-year rolling basis in order to keep capital outlays steady.

As he did each year, Strickland compared the 2026 Maintenance and Operations (M&O) millage rates for Fayette's cities: Peachtree City was 5.840; Fayetteville, 5.646; Tyrone, 2.889, and Brooks, 1.126. He showed another graph that combined the municipal and County millage rates, but not the Board of Education. This showed that Tyrone had the highest total millage rate, 10.682, because they relied on the County for Fire and EMS. Fayetteville used the County for EMS, and its total millage rate was 10.619. Peachtree City provided its own Fire and EMS and had a total millage rate of 9.813. Strickland said Peachtree City provided those services at a lower cost and with better quality than Fayette County.

Strickland said he did not include School taxes on his chart because they made up about 60% of the tax bill and overwhelmed the other numbers.

For an average house in Peachtree City valued at $508,000, the total tax bill would be lower than it would be in Fayetteville or Tyrone. The difference between Tyrone and Peachtree City was about $177 a year. Taxes amounted to $16.40 per day in Peachtree City; in Tyrone, it was $16.88, while in Fayetteville, taxes were $16.85 a day. In Brooks, the cost was $15.90, and in the County and Woolsey, taxes were $15.27. Strickland calculated that it cost $1.13 more a day to live in Peachtree City than in the County. He broke down an average Peachtree City homeowner's tax bill of $6,000, saying that about $4,000 went to the School Board, and around $1,200 to Peachtree City. The remainder was paid to the County for M&O and 911.

Strickland finished by reminding citizens of what they got by living in Peachtree City, such as the ISO 1 rated fire department, parks and recreation facilities and events, 100-plus miles of paths, a CALEA advanced certification Police Department, City-maintained neighborhood entrances and medians, and one of the best libraries in Georgia.

Next on the budget calendar would be the anticipated adoption of the operating budget and CIP at the August 20 Council meeting, along with the KPTCB and Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) budgets.

The Mayor opened the public hearing and asked who wanted to speak in favor of the budget. Paul Schultz said he thought, as he did last year, that this was a well-planned budget. He said he had lived in Peachtree City since 2007 and had noticed that past administrations had neglected maintenance on City facilities. He appreciated that the budget included maintaining the City's assets.

Schultz also said he believed enhanced homestead exemptions were worthwhile if they were balanced with sales tax revenues. He was glad to see there was a COLA for City staff and that attention was being paid to the aging stormwater system. Schultz thought the reserve funds merited a more thorough look and said if they could be tapped, perhaps the millage rate could be cut. He said he agreed with Strickland that living in Peachtree City was a bargain.

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

Polacek noted this was his first time dealing with a City budget and thanked Strickland for promptly answering his questions. He said he was glad to see Strickland pointing out how the 2.8% increase would be spent, saying he found all the additions justified. He remarked that the COLA actually could be viewed as a maintenance item because it helped retain the trained employees who took care of the City's assets. He went on to mention the increase in healthcare costs and said he understood the need for the new positions that had been created.

He asked Strickland why he had included the Comprehensive Plan in the budget instead of pulling it out as he had other one-time expenses. Strickland said he could have pulled it out, but it was coming from the General Fund.

Another comment from Polacek was that he did not think Strickland had given himself enough credit for dissolving the Engineering Department and the cost savings that would create. It was not captured in any one line item, he stated, but he believed it would free up around $150,000 that could be used elsewhere.

Polacek said it had been a trend to look to cutting the millage rate for property tax relief, but local governments had been granted additional mechanisms to deliver property tax relief. He said he felt the budget was lean enough so that if there was a millage rate cut, it would be detrimental to City services. He said a full millage rate rollback would save a taxpayer a few dollars each month, but these new exemptions could save about $1,000 a year on the average home. Polacek felt this was a more responsible and efficient way of delivering tax relief, and he preferred it over putting amenities on the chopping block.

Johnson agreed with Polacek's comments and said she wished there were more residents present to hear this information. She added that she was proud of this budget and felt they were focusing on the right things. She thought they were doing a good job on maintenance, but there was more they needed to do.

Johnson asked Strickland to explain the difference between reserves and fund balance. He said reserves were liquid assets and were part of the fund balance, which also included accounts receivable. Bush elaborated that the fund balance also included inventory and items that were carried forward from the previous year's budget. Strickland pointed out that the fund balance was about $32 million, while the reserves were $30 million.

Johnson thanked Strickland and staff for their work over several months on this budget.

Brown said she felt Peachtree City was in a good position financially. She said she hoped people understood that they had taken three engineering positions and reassigned them to other departments that they worked more closely with, saving money in the process. She said it was done in a smart way at an opportune time. Two of the three positions had been dropped to a lower grade, but engineers were no longer required for those positions, Brown remarked.

She pointed out that healthcare costs went up more than $750,000 for the City's 389 employees. Strickland said they competitively bid out their healthcare each year and would change if they found something better. Brown also noted that the new positions for the Youth Council and Public Arts Group were part-time and not eligible for health insurance.

The LHOST had the potential to provide meaningful savings to homesteaded homeowners, Brown remarked. Some people would argue that the new sales tax was a tax increase, but Brown pointed out that many outsiders spent money in Peachtree City, so they would be contributing to that sales tax revenue.

Last year's full millage rate rollback required cutting a fire tower from the budget, but, Brown stated, they were able to add it back later in the year. She said she had recommended taking reserves, and that was what they had done for a big-ticket item. That use of reserves meant they did not have to take out a bond or increase the millage rate.

Holland pointed out that they were going to borrow $12 million but that did not require an increase in taxes, which he thought was a sign that City money was being well managed.

The Mayor again said the final vote would be August 20.

Council/Staff Topics

Applications were being taken for citizen volunteers to serve on City boards, commissions, and authorities, and were available through the City website, Learnard said.

Polacek thanked staff for a successful Fourth of July and also the World Cup watch parties. He said he had heard positive feedback about the drone show and hoped they could continue it in the future.

Johnson also thanked everyone for their efforts on the celebration.

Brown said a few people complained that they were not in the right location to see the drone display, but those were the only negative comments she heard.

She said she was happy the Council retreat that was scheduled for August had been cancelled, and it was her understanding they would substitute special meetings throughout the year.

Strickland said they could hold four per year, headlined with one of the big four—Fire, Police, Public Works, and Recreation—paired with a smaller department. The department heads would provide updates and talk with Council. He explained that time during the regular Council meetings was limited, and he felt these conversations were necessary.

Holland said he had planned to discuss shared use path safety, but it was too late in the evening. He had one comment—the new big screen television used to broadcast the World Cup games was not big enough.

Meeker asked to make a statement. He said "transparency" was one of the buzzwords discussed by the attorneys at the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) conference this summer. That concept certainly was not unique to Peachtree City but had come up here over past few months in talk about alleged "secret meetings." He explained that he served as a legal advisor to Council and wanted to take a few minutes to talk about process and procedure.

Ensuring compliance with the Georgia Open Meetings Act and the Georgia Open Records Act was one of the most important things he did, Meeker said, reflecting that he had been a lawyer for 34 years, with 32 of those representing local governments. In that time, he had dealt with just two lawsuits on these issues. One was in 1995, and he was part of a successful defense of the City. The other involved a potential Open Meetings issue that was resolved by simply cancelling the meeting.

Meeker said a lawyer typically took the facts and tried to apply the law to those facts, and he wanted to mention a couple of facts. The City Council held a retreat in

Kennesaw earlier this year, and the notice for that meeting and the meeting itself complied with Open Meetings laws. A number of topics were discussed at that retreat, but no final action was taken on any of those topics. Where there had been consensus among Council, Meeker continued, those matters had already been put on agendas or would be on future agendas for final action.

The City Zoning Ordinance, he continued, determined permitted land uses. Changing those uses required two public hearings, one with the Planning Commission and another with City Council. The same requirements applied to annexations, text amendments, or rezonings of property.

Meeker commented that he took issue with challenges and implications that there had been secret meetings, saying he had told more than one person that if they believed there had been a violation of the Georgia Open Meetings Act, they could report it to the State Attorney General's Office or to the Solicitor's office so that criminal penalties could be enforced. He concluded by saying that Georgia law availed private citizens of the right to challenge actions taken if they believed they were in violation of the Open Records Act or the Open Meetings Law.

Executive Session

Holland moved to adjourn to executive session at 10 p.m. to discuss pending or threatened litigation or the acquisition, lease, or sale of real estate. Polacek seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Holland moved to reconvene in regular session at 10:18 p.m. Polacek seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

Martha Barksdale

Martha Barksdale, Recording Secretary

K. Learnard

Kim Learnard, Mayor