City Council of Peachtree City
Minutes of Meeting
October 4, 2001
7 p.m.

The City Council of Peachtree City met Thursday, October 4, 2001, in the City Hall Council Chambers. Mayor Lenox called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Other Councilmembers present were: Carol Fritz, Annie McMenamin, Steve Rapson, and Dan Tennant.

Announcements, Awards, Special Recognition

Mayor Lenox proclaimed October as Golf Cart Safety Month in Peachtree City. He presented the proclamation to Tennant, who suggested the emphasis on golf cart safety education and insurance. Lenox proclaimed October 6 as Alzheimer's Recognition Day and presented the proclamation to former Mayor Fred Brown, one of the organizers of the Memory Walk fundraiser. Gary Craig, outgoing Little League president, was recognized for his contribution to the program. Lenox recognized Art Swahlen of Public Services as the Employee of the Month for August.

Approval of Minutes

McMenamin moved to approve the September 20 9 a.m. Special Called Meeting Minutes as written. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously. McMenamin moved to approve the September 20 6:30 p.m. Special Called Meeting Minutes as written. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously. McMenamin moved to approve the September 20 Regular Meeting Minutes as written. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

1. Consider Appointment to the Development Authority – Belinda Sward
2. Resolution of Reimbursement for GMA Bricks & Mortar Lease/Purchasing Financing
3. Change in License Representative for the Village Store, Chevron #18
4. City Manager Contract

McMenamin moved to approve the consent agenda. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Agenda Items

04-01-01 Consider Livable Centers Initiative

David Rast gave a presentation on the Livable Centers Initiative (a copy of the report is included in the official meeting file). Peachtree City was one of 12 communities awarded the funding for the study a little over a year ago, Rast said. The study began, and then got off track a little as the Advisory Committee looked at some intensive commuter rail station scenarios and other things. He commended the Advisory Committee for their work. The work was done over the past several months, without a consultant, with input from City staff. Rast added there was also a lot of public involvement in the plan.

Rast gave a brief overview of the area included in the study. Most components required in a Livable Center already existed in the area, he said. As the puzzle was put together, the Advisory Committee found it was disjointed and the Advisory Committee focused on how to tie the area together and meet the criteria established by the Livable Centers objectives. The Advisory Committee established several goals. The first was to look at alternate transportation. Commuter rail was not an alternative desired by most residents in the City. Rast said if it were to come to the City, it would be looked at then. Instead, the Advisory Committee looked more at the multi-use path system already in place. A lot of the path system was developer driven, but there were some obvious gaps that have kept the area disjointed from the rest of the City, Rast continued.

Another goal was establishing a transportation system in the area to get people from Point A to Point B without having to get on Highway 54. Several alternatives were considered, including a secondary road system.

The next goal was to look at the current zoning of the undeveloped property, most of which was zoned General Commercial, Rast said. He said there was a pretty intensive retail corridor north and south of Highway 54 that was undeveloped. There were a lot of unknowns about the undeveloped property and many concerns about how the smaller parcels would be developed. One of the options considered was whether or not the retail corridor could be combined to get a larger footprint and to look at the parameters for development. The Advisory Committee also looked at re-development of some properties, such as the Line Creek Baptist Church property and some of the Line Creek Office Park property, and parameters for re-development.

The Advisory Committee also set a goal to implement architectural and aesthetic covenants and restrictions for development in the area. The way the ordinances were set up now, there weren't many restrictions. Rast commented that it might be difficult to get something other than the standard boxes.

Rast said the Advisory Committee took the goals and objectives, looked at all the scenarios, and ultimately came up with a Master Plan for the 54 West Corridor. Rast said that the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) planned to widen Highway 54 with two travel lanes eastbound and two travel lanes westbound with a 40-foot median so a third lane could be added if necessary in the future. The road parameters determined how the rest of the area would be developed. Rast pointed out that DOT was designing the highway to move traffic, whereas the City would like to see the area more pedestrian-friendly. Rast pointed out the present traffic signals and the signals planned for the future which included the intersections of MacDuff and Highway 54, Planterra and the Home Depot entrance and Highway 54, Huddleston and Highway 54, Marketplace and Highway 54, and Highways 74 and 54. The committee suggested adding another signal at Line Creek and Highway 54, which allowed a signaled intersection to the secondary road as well as access to the office park.

Rast said they were proposing two roads. One was a secondary road north of Highway 54 that started at MacDuff Parkway, continued between the outparcels and Summit apartments, continued to Home Depot/Wal-Mart, and ultimately through the church property and connecting to Huddleston Road at the intersection. A continuous retail/commercial development was seen along the properties to the west of MacDuff Parkway Rast said there were presently 12 to 13 curb cuts along Highway 54 and no one knew what DOT would do, either keeping the cuts or buying some from the property owners. The Advisory Committee would like to see curb cuts on Highway 54 limited and suggested access to outparcels on the highway be accessible from the secondary road rather than a series of curb cuts on Highway 54 or limit the curb cuts to one right-in, right-out between each traffic signal. The property owner was not willing to commit to the plan now, but the Advisory Committee felt it was something that could be encouraged when site plans were reviewed. The secondary road system south of Highway 54 would come in by the Days Inn property, and included two traffic circles, one of which would be along Planterra Way. This secondary road would be pulled back from Highway 54 to have a similar retail development to the north side of the highway, to maintain a 60-foot buffer, to allow properties to develop, and to prohibit a large tract. Rast emphasized this was a recommendation and the property owners had not been contacted. The Advisory Committee recommended the use of roundabouts to discourage cut-through traffic in Planterra Ridge and to make the traffic move more slowly. The Advisory Committee would also like to see another roundabout added near the Planterra amenities center to make traffic through that area very slow moving to discourage cut through traffic. The committee would also like to a second Planterra subdivision entrance at the roundabout to give the area more identity.

The Advisory Committee looked at extending the multi-use path system, what developers were proposing, what DOT was proposing, and what gaps would be left. One of the main components was a multi-use bridge over Highway 54 to provide access from the north to the south side of the highway. The committee felt that would provide an opportunity for a gateway to the City and the west corridor. The committee envisioned a tunnel from Westpark to Marketplace when Highway 74 would eventually be widened. With the widening of Highway 54, tunnels would be placed underneath the highway to allow golf cart access to both sides of the area. Rast said it was an exciting plan for the multi-use path system, much of which was being done by developers. He added that when Highway 54 was widened DOT had committed funds to put in two tunnels by the railroad bridge. The DOT engineer was designing the tunnels and the bridge, Rast said.

There would be intensive landscaping and street lighting along the corridor. Rast continued that the pedestrian crossings at the intersections might be done in stamped asphalt or concrete pavers to make them more pedestrian friendly.

Rast continued that Council support had allowed the Advisory Committee to submit the plan to the ARC. To be included, the plan must be approved by Council and the projects must be included in the City's PIP. Rast added that just because the projects were included in the PIP did not mean the City had to do them. Inclusion in the PIP made the projects eligible for funding from the ARC, he explained. The information needed to be submitted by mid-November and each project needed to be a separate submittal. He added that projects for FY 2002 had already been submitted, but Rast felt the City had a good chance of being included in FY 2003 TIP funding. Rast pointed out that they were dealing with a variety of property owners. He added that RAM Development, the developer for Wal-Mart and Home Depot, was willing to work on architectural standards on their property. The committee would like to develop review criteria for projects in the area and would like to see cohesive development along Highways 54 and 74. The results of the study should be included in the update of the City's Land Use Plan, Rast said.

Tennant asked Rast for clarification on the funding and whether it would come from the ARC or DOT. Rast explained that the ARC managed the DOT funding, including projects it felt was viable in the TIP. He said projects that weren't eligible for the Livable Centers Initiative could still be eligible under the TIP program. Tennant enquired if 20% of the funding still fell to the City, and Rast said yes. Steve Brown, a member of the Advisory Committee, asked Rast if there were federal grants available for some of the projects. Rast said there were several pots of money available, including grant money for this type of development. Those would be pursued first, then others, Rast added. Lenox added that money for the projects was available, but DOT's policy was that if the City wasn't ready to help itself, they wouldn't help them. Fayette County was the only county in metro Atlanta without a 1% LOST for transportation, Lenox added.

Rapson asked Rast about the 40 acres in the area that had not been identified for specific development. Rast replied that it was the only property within the approximately 1,500-acre area that was not spoken for and was not developed. Rapson referred to pages 14 and 15 of the study that said the cost of Phase Two of the northern secondary road from the Home Depot/Wal-Mart entrance drive to Huddleston Road should be shared by the developer and the City. Rast stated that was one of the points debated by the advisory group. Rapson commented that the reason people would use the road was to get to the commercial sites to spend money. Lenox stated that the developers didn't have to do any of this. To achieve what was best for the City, there had to be a certain amount of give and take. He agreed that he wanted the developers to pay for it, but didn't want to tie the City's hands.

Rast said there was a fine line and he was hoping the plan would be a win-win situation for everybody. If the city was willing to participate, the developers' feet would be held to the fire, he said. Rapson said it was a great plan, but he was concerned about putting $2.5 million in the PIP over the next two years. He said he realized that the plan was conceptual right now and the numbers weren't etched in stone unless the City got the grants. He commented that he was opposed to raising taxes now, and he was certainly opposed to overlaying $2.5 million over the next two years. Rast said it was required for communities to have the projects in the PIP to get funding. Once the dollars were committed, no one else could get them. If projects did not move forward, the money went back into the pot. Rast added that some projects were never built. Rapson said that with DOT, DCA, and ARC falling under the GRTA umbrella now, GRTA needed conceptual approvals, adopted plans, and for Council to have taken action and put the funding in place before the projects even got to the table for the TIP. Lenox said what Council was doing at this meeting represented a conceptual approval and commitment that it was a worthwhile project, but was not a final authorization for money. Rast added that the City would begin applying for grants in November for the projects. When the grants were awarded, they would come back to Council. If the money wasn't there, the project would be delayed. He added a lot of the projects were dependent on the road widening.

Tennant commented that he would be willing to pay a portion of the secondary road costs if it limited curb cuts on Highway 54. Rapson agreed that Council needed to be flexible enough to work out what was best for the City. Council commended the Advisory Committee on the work they had done to prepare the study. Tennant moved to approve the transmittal resolution to the ARC. McMenamin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

09-01-01 Public Hearing – Consider the 2001 Millage Rate

Lenox read the procedure for the public hearing. Basinger told Council this was the final public hearing of three required by the State to consider the millage rate. He stated that Council was required to set the millage rate tonight after the final public discussion. Financial Services

Director Paul Salvatore gave a brief presentation on the 2001 millage rate. (A copy of the presentation is included in the official meeting file.)

McMenamin read a prepared statement on her thoughts about the budget and millage rate. She pointed out that the City Manager had directed only essential department purchases be made until the full impact of the economic slowdown was known. McMenamin felt Council needed to direct staff to develop a plan that would compensate for a 5-20% decrease in revenues expected to be affected by the events of September 11. She asked the directors and chiefs to take another look at their operating budgets and identify any equipment or cuts that could be made without affecting service delivery. She added that if it was determined prior to the end of the fiscal year that all the cuts weren't necessary, then funds should be released back to the departments and projects and equipment returned to the PIP.

Ben Bauman asked if the City had a long-term contract for natural gas and gasoline. Salvatore said he had looked at that and had gone with the low bid. Bauman added that it would be a good time to lock in the price since natural gas prices were lower. Lenox pointed out that the City purchased natural gas with the County and the Board of Education to keep costs down, but didn't know if anyone had looked at other options to drive down costs. Rapson commented that even though the prices had dropped, the savings hadn't been passed on to consumers. Basinger said staff would look at it.

Rapson said he agreed with a lot of McMenamin's comments. It was common sense for the City to attempt to live within its means, he said. Rapson added that was hard, especially since the City had been growth-oriented for so long and was now feeling the effects of growth slowing down. McMenamin stated that the Council had also always tried to meet the demands of the citizens and was a city of recreation. In other cities, private interests provided those facilities and programs.

Sales tax was the City's biggest revenue source, Lenox stated. If that revenue were to drop 20% it meant that purchases in the community had dropped 20% and represented an 8% reduction in overall revenue. The other vulnerable area was the hotel/motel tax. If the hotel/motel tax was cut in half, it represented a 3% overall budget shortfall. Both areas represented a 10% drop in revenues and shouldn't be taken lightly, Lenox said. Salvatore said he had looked at the major revenue sources that might be affected which totaled over $7 million. A 20% cut in the $7 million collected from those areas would be $1.4 million, Salvatore said.

Staff was working on a contingency plan, Lenox said. He explained that the output was pretty well fixed and most of the cost was salaries and benefits. He said the economy was pretty resilient and Peachtree City was a resilient community. The City needed to be prepared. Staff had gone back through every line item and found an additional $75,000 to cut, Basinger said. The City did not produce a product, but it provided a service. Basinger said the City couldn't cut people and provide the services. Staff would look at the budget again and come up with a plan to take care of a 5% to 20% deficit in revenues, including the cash reserves. Basinger said staff had hoped to improve cash reserves, but might have to dip into them. He added it would be a combination of all the sources, expenses and revenues and cash reserves that would be looked at. The recommended millage rate would make a tremendous improvement in the cash reserves, but unfortunately, the City might have to dip into them right away depending upon how bad the situation got. McMenamin replied President Bush had said he would take care of national defense and that the public needed to keep the economy going. Basinger added that it was important to the morale of the citizens for the city to continue to provide services.

Recreation Commissioner Earl Spell told Council that the City's Little League Association had been approached to use the City's baseball/soccer complex for a regional tournament, which would benefit the hotel/motel tax.

McMenamin commented that it was important to maintain continuity for the City's families as she recalled her husband putting in three tours in Vietnam in five years. She said she looked to the community to help provide a stable, safe environment.

Phyllis Aquayo stated that everyone moved to Peachtree City for a certain quality. The residents expected the City to spend money wisely and provide quality services. Most residents would rather see the millage rate go up than lose the quality of the services, she said.

New Agenda Items

10-01-01 Public Hearing – Adopt the 2001 Millage Rate

Lenox stated that the purpose of the three previous public hearings were for information and didn't call for any action. The purpose of this hearing was to adopt the millage rate. Staff recommended a gross millage rate of 8.697 and LOST rollback rate of 4.382, which left a net millage rate of 4.315 mills, the rate used in preparation of the budget for the next fiscal year.

Tennant commented that everyone had come to expect a certain level of service from the City and that the City Manager saw to it that there was a heck of a bang for the buck. These were difficult times for some families and a lot of businesses were walking on pins and needles. The bottom line was he didn't feel it was the time to increase people's taxes. Tennant suggested that the Public Safety budgets be left alone and that the other departments cut their budgets 10% across the board. That would mean cutting people, but Tennant added that the private sector was doing that.

Aquayo asked how much the millage rate increase would be for a $100,000 home. Salvatore said a mill was 47.5 cents per thousand on the assessed value of a home, or about $40 per year for a $200,000 home. He added there was a tax credit increase of about the same amount. Lenox said the City was talking about ½ mill, so the cost would be about $20 for a $100,000 home. Aqayo stated that if a millage rate increase allowed the City to provide services and kept the unemployment rate from going up, she didn't feel it was big sacrifice. Lawrence DeMarino said it was still a tax increase versus a tax cut. Lenox pointed out that the difference between the City and federal governments was that the City wasn't allowed to operate on a deficit budget.

Kathy Cheney commented that the millage rate increase hit home with her. Her husband retired from the military so they could stay in Peachtree City. Their home was their single largest investment, she said. The City needed to make sure the kids were taken care of and as well as the things that make Peachtree City the place it was. She said she didn't mind spending a little money now to protect their investment.

Ben Bauman, a small business owner in the City, stated if the City took more money from businesses, they would lay people off to make budget. He asked if a few people should be laid off in the City, or 50 in the community. If government services were cut, those people might remain employed. Lenox said the average value of a home in Peachtree City was $200,000, which was just under $28 a month in ad valorem property taxes at 4.315 mills. He pointed out that was less than people paid per month for cable or cell phones. He added that the City had had a lower tax rate and provided services way above other cities. Staff provided those services cheaply and he didn't want to cripple that ability for a very small amount of money per household, Lenox said. McMenamin asked whom the City would lay off, whether it would be the people who pick up trash and keep the City looking good, or someone else.

Tennant said he wasn't talking about doing away with departments or necessarily doing away with people, although it could come to that. He added that $30 or $40 wouldn't change people's lifestyles, but it would affect people's attitudes about government.

Rapson stated he was opposed to the tax increase, to laying people off, and to a 10% cut across the board. He felt the tax increase wasn't warranted because of the cash reserves the City had. He said he didn't want to see employees laid off, but that could happen when talking about 10% cuts. Larger departments could handle the cuts, but smaller departments couldn't absorb them. There were other ways to pick up the extra 10%, such as not hiring people right away to fill vacancies. Rapson added that he was talking short-term solutions since he believed the economy would turn around.

John Mrosek said it was a matter of principal and that the nation elected a president and Congress who chose to cut taxes. The City was experiencing a decline in revenue and expenses had to be cut. The City's tax increase followed the County Commission's tax increase. Nobody wanted to cut important things in the City, but Mrosek said the City had to live within its means. Lenox asked Mrosek what services he would have him cut and said he refused to cut services. Mrosek said there should be citywide cost accounting audits and that everything in the City should be subject to competitive bidding. Mrosek said the examination of the budgets was a necessary discipline and was not a 24-hour process. He added that the LOST revenue had to go down because of September 11.

Lenox moved that the millage rate of 8.697 gross millage and LOST rollback of 4.382 resulting in a net millage of 4.315, as recommended by City staff and reviewed during the budget process, be approved. McMenamin seconded. The motion carried 3-2 with Rapson and Tennant voting against it.

10-01-02 Discussion on the Commission on Children and Youth
Cele Eifert, chairman of the Commission on Children and Youth (CCY), asked Council to dissolve the CCY. Eifert told Council the CCY was one of the few city-based CCYs in a field of county-based CCYs. The CCY also represented a city that had no children/youth-related social services. Nonetheless accomplishments had been made and programs had been implemented by the commission. It was time to pass the baton to Fayette FACTOR, which came into the forefront last October and was a collaborative of countywide services and resources. The CCY recommended Council dissolve the CCY immediately, that Council appoint a Councilmember or City representative with decision-making authority to the Fayette FACTOR Board of Directors, and that Council support the Youth Advisory Board as a stand-alone entity under the Recreation Department.

McMenamin asked Eifert to explain Fayette FACTOR. McMenamin added that her point was that dissolving the CCY was not taking anything away from the City.

Jill Holmes-Long, the chair of the Fayette FACTOR (Family Alliance for Teamwork, Outreach and Resources), explained that FACTOR was granted by state money last October and was created to be a networking group for all services and service providers in the county, and to look at what was there or not and plug in the holes. She continued that children and youth from throughout the county crossed municipal lines for schools and other activities, and that would continue to grow. She pointed out there had been more suicides in the 15-20 age range in the last five years than ever before in Fayette County. Fayette FACTOR made sure there were services in place and there was not duplication. The organization's board was growing and had representatives from the municipalities, faith-based organizations, business, and service providers.

Lenox asked about the option recommended by staff which included appointing a councilmember or city representative to Fayette FACTOR. Eifert stated that CCY preferred that the representative should be someone with decision-making authority and that making a Councilmember the representative showed the level of importance and value that children and youth held. McMenamin said she would rather the representative be a member of the Recreation Commission. Rapson, who had teen-age children, agreed with Eifert and felt it was more appropriate for a Councilmember to serve on the FACTOR board. He said he would be willing to serve. CCY Commissioner Chuck Lehman pointed out that when FACTOR was formed Mayor Steele from Fayetteville was involved. CCY Coordinator Bernice Wassell added that Cheryl Lee, mayor of Tyrone, had also been involved.

Lenox said since it was the consensus that someone from Council, who had the time and the willingness to do it, could serve until the consensus changed. McMenamin said she didn't want to downplay the Recreation Commission since the CCY came out of it and did do some things about mental health, date rape, and branched out into other areas. Lehman pointed out that Wassell was already in the FACTOR as a director. McMenamin said she felt more comfortable with Wassell in the FACTOR since she worked with the YAB and had that input. Tennant and Fritz said they were also willing to do it. Fritz said people often came to the Board of Health wanting assistance and having something like FACTOR as a source would be very helpful.

Holmes-Long said the steering committee for the FACTOR had been in place for two and a half years. There was an active working collaborative of which Wassell was an active member. The collaborative was divided into task committees, with the Research and Development Committee looking at what the best practices were to address issues with kids. She added there had been a 1% increase in juvenile crime and the committee was looking at the reasons behind it and what the crimes were. The Outreach Communication Committee had put together a website, www.fayettefactor.org. A countywide assessment looked at the strengths kids needed to be productive citizens in the future. Fayette FACTOR wanted good healthy families and parents that parented well with children that would grow into good citizens.

Lenox moved to adopt the action recommended by Cele Eifert as chairman of the CCY utilizing Option 3 (Option 3 recommended Council dissolve the CCY immediately, that Council appoint a

Councilmember or City representative with decision-making authority to the Fayette FACTOR Board of Directors, and that Council support the Youth Advisory Board as a stand-alone entity under the Recreation Department). Tennant seconded. Fritz asked if CCY objected to having two councilmembers on the FACTOR board. Eifert and Holmes-Long said no. The motion carried unanimously.

Tennant moved that Steve Rapson be appointed as Council representative to the FACTOR. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

10-01-03 Consider Exceptions to Water Restrictions – Fundraisers for the 9/11 victims
Basinger said the City had received a request from Chick-fil-A to hold a car wash in conjunction with a community yard sale on Sunday, October 7. All proceeds from both events would be donated to the September 11 Disaster Relief Fund. Basinger continued that Peachtree City was a member of the Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division 15-County Metro Atlanta Outdoor Water Ban, which prohibited outdoor water usage between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. Council had the authority to grant an exception to the ban and Basinger asked that Council authorize the Chick-fil-A exception as well as any other requests for fundraisers in which all proceeds would benefit the September 11 Disaster Relief Fund. Rapson moved to approve the request. Tennant seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Council/Staff Topics
There were no Council/Staff Topics.

There were two personnel matters, one legal matter, and one real estate matter for executive session. Lenox moved to go into executive session after a short break. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

McMenamin moved to adjourn the executive session. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to discuss, McMenamin moved to adjourn the meeting. Fritz seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Jane Miller, City Clerk

Robert L. Lenox, Mayor