



CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH

CITY COUNCIL

JUNE 13, 2024

Council Meeting Room

Regular Session

7:00 PM

**7224 GA HIGHWAY 21
PORT WENTWORTH, GA 31407**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Gary Norton called the meeting to order

2. PRAYER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Gary Norton Led the Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

3. ROLL CALL - CLERK OF COUNCIL

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Gary Norton	Mayor	Present
Thomas Barbee	Mayor Pro Tem	Present
ArtLise Alston-Cone	Council Member	Present
Gabrielle Nelson	Council Member	Present
Mark Stephens	Council Member	Present
Rufus Bright	Council Member	Present
Shawn Randerwala	Council Member	Present

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS

7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

9. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

11. CONSENT AGENDA

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Adoption of FY2025 Budget

- Public Hearing

City Manager Steve Davis gave a presentation of the budget to Council and stated that he wanted to thank all of the department heads and staff that worked many hours on this budget. We are following the tradition that we started last year by including mission and vision statements, accomplishments and goals for each department which is located in the operating budget. He also thanked Mr. Thomas Kilmartin for all of his work. In this presentation he discussed the following topics:

- Highlights
- Changing economic conditions
- City growth challenges
- Service snapshot
- Budgeted positions
- Objectives
- Revenue and Expenses
- Capital Projects
- Grants

Councilwoman Alston-Cone asked how much of our current proposed budget is used for matching grant funds, Mr. Kilmartin stated that it is about 400,000 dollars.

City Manager Steve Davis said that the Millage rate will generate 848,000 dollars, the residential component of that will generate approximately 345,000 dollars, with the rest being generated by commercial and industrial, with their being some small miscellaneous things in their as well. He also explained that the loans that are mentioned in the budget include the fire house and that loan is through Truist bank, and the property is going to be run through the GMA protocol, the last page of the capital budget shows the loans and interest rates. That is the only one that we have done so far, we are establishing a bond rating for the other. There are also some lingering loans on the wastewater treatment plant that were financed through GMA and Georgia Fund. He also explained that the entire presentation is about new personnel, transit, economy, inflation, rising cost of materials, construction and the increases across the board. The economic outlook that is in the budget also shows the justification.

Councilwoman Alston- Cone explained that we are one city and all of the capital projects that are mentioned in the capital budget is for our entire city, and although we cannot do everything, we are trying to make sure that the city is inhabitable for all residents.

B. Adoption of Millage Rate

- Public Hearing

City Manager Steve Davis gave a presentation on the Millage Rate. He discussed the following topics:

- Notice of tax increase and 5-year digest
- Computation of Millage Rate
- Certification

He stated that the increase would be 1.056 mills. There was also a calculation of the average home that had to be released, and the calculation came out to be 84 dollars per home, which will be the impact to the residents. However, it does not take into account all the different exemptions that are available in different communities throughout the state. In addition to all the county, school, senior, and veteran exemptions the city of Port Wentworth also offers a 40,000-dollar homestead exemption off their city property taxes. He also stated that we are experiencing hyper growth and the rate at which we have grown in three years is not a normal thing. He explained that the increase that they are seeking is the exact millage rate that Chatham Area Transit charges for their transit tax for everyone that is in their tax district, which we are seeking to be put into, and if we receive that legislation, we can pull this mill back out and let CAT charge it themselves.

Councilman Stephens explained that in 7 years the tax digest has more than doubled and property values have increased at least 100,000 per house if not more.

Councilwoman Alston-Cone asked prior to this how did we manage the cost of running the city,

and Mr. Davis said that he has only been here since February of 2022, but he can say that the operations were very limited, and we did have a substantial police force but there was no finance, technology, economic development, or public works departments. They were funding operations out of infrastructure money in my opinion. Councilwoman Alston-Cone asked what would happen if we kept the status quo, and he said that it will take money out of the reserved fund, and that they are looking for grants which will need matching funds for. He also explained that there is a certain amount of money that must be maintained as emergency funds, so that in case of an emergency we can maintain our operations for a period of times.

Councilman Bright stated if we look at the surrounding counties they're changing and growing, we are just doing it at a faster rate. Everything changes and grows.

13. NEW BUSINESS

14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

16. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilman Stephens made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson. Approved Unanimous

Mayor Gary Norton

The foregoing minutes are true and correct and approved by me on this _____ day of _____, 2024.

ATTEST:

Zahnay Smoak, Clerk of Council