



CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH
CITY COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 21, 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

Council Member Rufus Bright Led the Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL - CLERK OF COUNCIL

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

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilman Thomas Barbee made a motion to approve the agenda as is.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Thomas Barbee, Council Member
SECONDER:	Rufus Bright, Council Member
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

A. Port Wentworth Gymnastics Team

Tiffany Lancaster, Director of Parks and Recreation, shared how the Port Wentworth Gymnastics team began 12 years ago as a small tumbling class with just a mat in the gym and has since blossomed into a full-fledged gymnastics program. She states that over the last three years, it has grown to include a competitive team that travels up and down the East Coast. She expressed her excitement and credited the Gymnastics and Fitness Coordinator, Melissa Deviney, for making it all possible.

Melissa Deviney shared all of the accomplishments that the Gymnastics Team has accomplished throughout the year.

B. Employee Recognition

City Manager Steve Davis recognized Chief Lance Moore for his 15 years of dedicated service. He commended Chief Moore for his remarkable career progression from a general firefighter to fire chief and highlighted his leadership during a period of growth for the department. Under Chief Moore's leadership, the department has transitioned from a small operation to a large, professional organization, now preparing to open its third fire station and potentially a fourth. City Manager Steve Davis presented Chief Moore a plaque to honor his contributions.

City Manager Steve Davis also recognized Deputy City Manager David Stahl who is also the Deputy Fire Chief and is head of Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, and Technology for all of the work that he has done for the city.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS

A. Georgia Benton

Discussed the following topic(s):

- City Ordinances

7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

A. Regular Council Meeting Minutes - October 17, 2024

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
SECONDER:	ArtLise Alston-Cone, Council Member
AYES:	None

9. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

City Manager Steve Davis stated that with Thanksgiving next week, City Hall will close at noon on Wednesday and remain closed Thursday and Friday for the holiday. He stated that on December 3rd, there will be a pre-legislative breakfast at the Hyatt as well as the first public open house for the comprehensive plan. Also, on December 3rd, the Citizens Academy Graduation will be held. He stated that that same night is the Chatham Municipal Association Dinner. He stated that on December 4th, James Touchton will host his first Economic Outlook Luncheon through the Port Wentworth Development Authority at the Georgia Tech Campus. On December 7th, Parks and Recreation will host the family event with a Polar Express theme as well as the first Christmas Parade. He stated that Planning and Zoning is on the 9th. On December 14th, the Broncos flag football fundraiser will be held at Mobley Park. They also explained that the Citizens Engagement meeting is held every 3rd Friday of the month and the next meeting will be Friday December 20, 2024.

Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson stated that the Shop with a Cop will take place on December 21st. More information regarding Shop with a Cop will be on the City's website and are currently accepting donations.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

11. CONSENT AGENDA

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Shawn Randerwala, Council Member
SECONDER:	Rufus Bright, Council Member
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

A. Chatham Fire Mutual Aid Agreement

Approval

City Manager Steve Davis explained that they currently have an agreement with Chatham EMS and that the fire department is transitioning into the new Chatham County Fire Department. He stated that this is consistent with arrangements in other municipalities such as Pooler, Garden City, and even Effingham County.

B. Hwy 30 & Anchor Park Blvd Intersection Change Order No.

Approval

City Manager Steve Davis explained that the Anchor Park Change Order covers Highway 30 improvements including the entrance and storm water drainage. It involves turning lanes and future potential upgrades. He states it does not include signalization. He states permitted through GDOT, the exact number was not available earlier but was budgeted for park infrastructure. The Change Order also includes funding to extend water and sewer lines to the concession stand, allowing the field project to begin.

C. City Hall Expansion RFP

Approval

City Manager Steve Davis stated that adding 15 offices was discussed during the workshop. After a full RFP process, five companies attended the mandatory pre-bid but only two submitted bids. The low bid, at \$1.6 million, was selected based on grading criteria including qualifications and financial stability and won unanimously. He stated that this expansion will allow us to consolidate offices for administration, development services, finance, HR, payroll, and some billing functions.

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Ethics Ordinance-2nd Reading

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

13. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Peter Schoenauer as Agent for Shayanam, LLC requests the approval of a General Site Plan for "Hilton LivSmart & Hilton Tru". PIN# 7-0037-02-017 located on Hospitality Lane in the 3rd Council District, zoned C-2.

Approval

City Planner, Katie Dunnigan explained that the applicant plans to develop two hotel buildings with side features next to the existing Home2Suites. The proposed hotels will include a combined total of approximately 227 guest rooms. The site plan includes significant buffering for the adjacent subdivision, including a 245-foot Georgia Power easement, a 50-foot gas line easement, and any required landscaping. Additionally, she stated land in front of Magellan Boulevard to the Southeast of the site will remain undeveloped for future commercial use. Staff reviewed the general site plan, found it compliant with the zoning ordinance and planning board recommends approval. City Manager Steve Davis stated that the city worked extensively to ensure the commercial piece was carved out of the plan to allow space for future restaurants and retail. He stated that with the development along Highway 21, commercial space is becoming limited. The original plan did not include this feature, but the applicant agreed to the change.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

- B. Phillip McCorkle as Agent for Ronald Royal and SPH 21, LLC, requests the approval of a General Site Plan for "Port Wentworth Commerce Center". PINs# 7-0975-01-01024, 7-0975-01-028, 7-0906-01-001B located off Highway 21 in the 1st Council District, zoned I-1. City Planner Katie Dunnigan explained that this is now new industrial development but the final stage for this portion of the industrial park. She stated that the applicant plans to develop three warehouses totaling over 1 million square feet on 82,3 acres. The site design includes maximum vegetative buffering along the north and east and improved visual screening along the southern boundary. She stated that one unique aspect of this application is the applicant's request to modify the maximum allowable parking spaces. The current ordinance allows one space per 5,000 square feet, but the applicant is requesting one space per 2,000 square feet to attract tenants.

She also stated that staff reviewed the plan and found it compliant with the ordinance.

Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson thanked Katie Dunnigan for mentioning that this is not new and that this is all in the same industrial park.

Councilman Shawn Randerwala made a motion to approve with additional parking, which was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Nelson. Vote was unanimous.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Shawn Randerwala, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

C. Fifth Amendment to the 2001 Water Service Agreement Approval

City Manager Steve Davis explained that last year the City did a temporary agreement with Savannah. With the substantial growth that the City is facing, an ample amount of time was spent with the modeling and forecasting to negotiate this water agreement. There will be a 40% increase in our capacity going from 1.5 million gallons to 2.1 million gallons staged over a two-year period. There has also been an increase to the gallons per minute, which is what we are judged on for everything except emergency services. Looking at future growth, there is also language included in the agreement to us neither agreeing nor not agreeing to working with Savannah as they need another water tower to service their water main. This would be a regional one that would make sure that they have pressure at the airport, Savannah Highlands, and Effingham County, in addition to ours. We also discussed adding a new meter station along Meinhard rd. so that we could loop our park, the exact location is not specific with the water tower or the metering station at this time. He also stated that this is a fantastic opportunity, and this water agreement will serve our needs for the next two years.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson thanked them for the agreement and explained that she understood how significant this agreement is and how difficult it has been to reach the agreement in favor of us and Savannah. It is important that this is done now, because we are in a housing crisis and the houses are coming. We are fortunate enough here in Port Wentworth that we do not have a true homeless population, but if we do not get a handle on this housing for our portion of the region then we could be facing that.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
SECONDER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

D. Port Wentworth Commercial Development Incentive Package

City Manager Steve Davis explained that the City is short on its retail and restaurant development, and there are some needs that need to be a faced such as medical, banking, restaurants, and tourism. This is an incentive package, and many cities across the state offer incentive packages

from time to time to address needs within the community. The growth that we are getting with the rooftops will support the retail and restaurant base, and this is an item that will give incentive to the development of these projects to get them to come here. This will be until the end of next year, and this is just another tool that we need for economic development so that we can stand out and reach the higher franchises and regular sit-down restaurants that we are missing right now.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

- E. Port Wentworth Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the "Port Collective"
Economic Development Director James Touchton shared a PowerPoint with Council explaining the Port Collective. City Manager Steve Davis explained that this contains the same incentives that was just passed in the previous agenda item, but this is a MOU that is potentially a development authority deal like the Ghost Pirates where we will maintain ownership of the property and do a long-term lease. This will be a tool for not just obtaining the venues and things for people to do, but it will also allow us to grow our development authority, get funding, tax abatements and incentives that we put out for the tap fees. This is just the first step in this process.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES:	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS

- A. Budget Amendment For The Years Ending 6/30/2025-1st Reading
- Public Hearing
- CFO Thomas Kilmartin explained that there are three items on the budget item amendment which include:
- Increased grant funding to support open green space purchasing of three properties on Bonnybridge Rd. Prior to this amendment for FEMA the City had adopted a grant application and we have been negotiating with Congressman Carter's office, FEMA, and Homeowners and the agreement was for FEMA to increase their funding with a local match and we are asking to move forward with that.
 - Grant amendment as we recently had the hurricane, and we have a preexisting contract with the waste-debris remediation company and a management company that oversees those actions that are approved by FEMA. This amount of money that has been placed in the budget will cover the cost to clean up the City. There is no local cost to us as this is a pass through, so we have to adopt a budget change so that when the funds are applied for after the cleanup is completed, we can seek reimbursement.
 - Increase spending authority by 91,000 out of the balance fund from the end of FY23. There is a technology fund that was funded by the court through traffic finds. That fund has been used throughout several years to supply enhanced technology for the police. There were not enough

resources provided in this year's budget, so we are asking for the increase.

B. Amendment to the Nuisance Ordinance-1st Reading

- Public Hearing

City Attorney Scott Robichaux explained that this an update to the nuisance ordinance focused on code enforcement. We realized that there a couple of different issues.

- Making sure that someone is notified of the issue, the current ordinance says that you have to physically present the notice to someone before anything can happen. Which creates logistical issues. This ordinance amendment allows for different options for notification that lets them know that they need to bring their property up to standard.
- If it reaches the level of fines it allows for us to put it on the utility bills as some people are ignoring the notices and won't do anything.

Councilman Barbee asked if there will be a payment plan put in place, and Steve Davis stated that is something that is already in place, however, there will be times where a payment plan is not offered depending upon the situation. The example that was given was if someone who was consistent in not following the ordinance and then kept wanting to do the payment plan.

Councilwoman Alston-Cone asked how soon after receiving the registered postage assuming that we should get our piece back will the assessment occur on their utility bill, Scott Robichaux stated that is not specifically in the ordinance because we wanted to give them a reasonable amount of time. When they receive their citation, it will say that you can reach out to, there can be an appeal process, or if you wanted to go to municipal court and/or ask the judge questions about it they could allowing for due process to be put in place. Then it will go on the utility bill.

C. Amend the City of Port Wentworth Zoning Ordinance-1st Reading

- Public Hearing

City Attorney Scott Robichaux explained that this was an omnibus amendment, with two parts.

- Adding a definition on what mixed use development is
- Add to the requirements already in place by incorporating a master site plan for phased industrial, so that they do not have to come back to council for every change.

Councilwoman Alston-Cone asked does the amendment grandfather our current PID or is it just for new ones, Scott Robichaux stated that it doesn't go backwards, and we are in discussion with the individuals who are bringing the large phased industrial that we have right now because they've got some of their property rezoned under the old ordinance and some of it underneath the new, but this will bring it all together so that we don't have to worry about the different rules between the properties at least in regard to the site plan.

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Litigation

B. Personnel

C. Real Estate

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson made a motion to go into to executive session, and it was second by Councilman Bright. Approved Unanimous.

Councilman Bright made a motion to reconvene regular session, and it was second by Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson. Approved Unanimous

Councilman Bright made a motion to raise City Manager Steve Davis pay by 7%, and it was second by Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson. Approved Unanimous

16. ADJOURNMENT

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