



CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH
CITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 20, 2025

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
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	Remote
Shawn Randerwala	Council Member	Present

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS

A. Avril Roy-Smith

Discussed the following topic(s):

B. Thanked the City's Police Department

- Agenda packet

B. Isaac Wright

Discussed the following topic(s):

- Community Infrastructure Concerns
- Affordable Housing Concerns

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

7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

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

9. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson read the Black History Month Proclamation.

City Manager Steve Davis states that the city’s third annual Black History Month program is this Saturday at 11:00 AM at Rice Creek School. He stated also on Saturday, don’t miss the first home game of the Port Wentworth Broncos football team; the semifinals are at Mobley Park at 6:00 PM. The Broncos have several home games scheduled in March and April as their season ramps up. The Planning and Zoning meeting is on March 3, and Spring Fest with Live Like Locals will be held on the morning of March 5 and City Hall will be closed on St. Patrick’s Day, March 17. He states that Councilwoman Cone’s Citizen Advisory Group meeting date is now set for March 21 at 6:30 PM. He recognized Mr. Reggie Bush and his Public Works team. He expresses that they have been doing a tremendous job, dredging the downtown ditch and beautifying the Highway 21 corridor by cleaning medians, intersections, and walkways overnight with the support of the police department. He states that their hard work and dedication are greatly appreciated.

A. Young Gamechangers 2025 Cohort-David Stahl
 City Manager Steve Davis stated that the city had a Young Game Changer in 2023 and 2024, Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson and Clerk of Council, Zahnay Smiley, and for the third year in a row, one of the city's staff members has earned this recognition, highlighting the expertise and quality of our team. He states that he is proud to announce that the Deputy City Manager, David Stahl, has been named a Young Game Changer. He states that this honor is for rising leaders under forty, and he fits the bill. He states that he is doing great work, growing immensely, and that he is proud of him.

B. City of Ethics Plaque Presentation
 City Manager Steve Davis explains that the City has met all requirements through the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) to be recognized as a Certified City of Ethics. He states joining us tonight to present this honor is Mrs. Pam Helton from GMA.

Pam Helton states that it is a privilege and honor to represent GMA and recognize the city as a Certified City of Ethics. She states that GMA applauds the City's commitment to ethical governance and the City's ordinance affirming that commitment. This recognition speaks volumes about the City's dedication to each other, the city, and citizens.

City Manager Steve Davis states that many people do not realize how much Pam Helton does for the city through GMA. He states that she provides invaluable training, important information, and serves as a vital communication link for the city.

C. Pond Presentation: Comprehension Plan Update
 City Manager Steve Davis states that last year, the city engaged POND Engineering and POND Consulting to update the City's comprehensive plan, the last version of which was completed in 2020. He states that they have been working diligently with stakeholder groups and hosting public meetings. He states that tonight, Lauren Patterson, the lead project manager on this project, is here to provide an update on the activities and progress.

Laura Patterson gave a presentation of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. She explains that a comprehensive plan is a long-range tool to guide growth and development within a city. She states that it provides a foundation that allows governments to achieve their community vision. Key points that were presented in the presentation includes:

- Project Timeline
- Project Promotions (open houses, website, online map survey, flyers, television ads, etc.)
- Review of Engagement Outreach
- Community Findings: There were twenty-four visitors to the website with online feedback
- Vision and Goals: Land use, transportation, economics, environment, quality of life, and housing opportunities
- Future Land Use: Integrate the optimal blend of land uses to establish districts that support residents and businesses
- Next Steps: Draft recommendations, draft work plan, draft report, public hearing 2, public review period, final updates to plan, DCA plan review process, final plan submitted

Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson thanked POND. She states that they are working very hard to shape the city into what everyone envisions but needs the citizen's input. She states that they can visit the website, check Facebook, and scan the QR code to join.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

RESULT:
MOVER:

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

- A. Atlantic Waste Services Inc. Agreement - Amendment
Approve
- B. Well Permit Application
Approval
- C. Verde Outdoors Billboards Lease Agreements

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Consideration of the 2nd Reading of a Zoning Map Amendment application submitted by Steven Campisi as Agent for Coastal Club Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 20.989 of 22.239 acres from C-2 to R-5, to allow for a multifamily residential development. PIN # 7-0037-02-019, located in the 3rd Council District, on Newport Blvd.
City manager Steve Davis explains that last month, the city held a public hearing for the first reading of this project which was developed in close collaboration with the City's economic development team. He states that this project involves downzoning from current C3 to R5. The developer is the same group behind Point Grand and the Newport Boulevard Extension, which connected Magellan to highway 21, and they are also working on another development in the city. He states that their record as excellent citizen partners are precisely why staff recommended this project in the recent planning and zoning review.

Councilwoman ArtLise Alston-Cone asked that provided that we approve this rezoning, how will this impact the city's already adopted future land use map? City Planner Katie Dunnigan explains that it would have very minimal impact on a loss to C2 increased to R5. She states that they are maintaining a portion of the property for commercial use.

Councilwoman Cone asked if there is a provided percentage? City Planner Katie Dunnigan states that the percentage is not available at this time.

Councilman Mark Stephens asked if this would be nearly twenty-one acres or an acre and a half? City Manager Steve Davis states that it is just shy of two acres that they have carved out. He states that the city can do another restaurant site. It is adjacent to a similar carve-out that the city did on the adjacent site, which backs up to it on Magellan. He states that this is directly behind the Bojangles.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson asked if this will be a walkable community? City Manager Steve Davis explains that there are sidewalks provided right in front of it from when they did the road improvement. The city is working with them to get access to across the backside of the Point Grand apartments, allowing us to connect their sidewalk down behind there and then into the backside of the park. Councilwoman Alston-Cone asked if this was a condition of zoning? City Manager Steve Davis states that it is not a condition of zoning, but they are working with the city on that. He states that they have sold the Point Grand property, so they do not own it.

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

13. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Fee Schedule Update
Resolution approving acceptance.
City Manager Steve Davis states that the fee schedule update is simply to reflect the city's new ordinance regarding temporary storage units and their associated fee structure. He states that there are no other changes to the fee schedule and that this update is solely for that purpose. The initial thirty-day period will have a fee of \$150, and if an extension is needed, each additional thirty-day period will cost \$75. He states that this is the only adjustment being made to the fee schedule.

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

- B. Coastal Club Port Wentworth, LLC, requests the approval of a General Site Plan "Pointe Grande Newport Boulevard". PIN# 7-0037-02-019, located on Newport Blvd in the 3rd Council District. Zoned C-2, proposed zoning R-5.
City Manager Steve Davis states that this zoning is the same as the one that was just passed, and this is a complementary step in the process. He states that moving forward, zoning and the general site plan will appear on the same agenda. He states that this requires two separate votes by the Council, but it ensures that the city already has the site plan in place when the zoning is considered. He states that the general site plan was presented during the zoning process, and if approved, will proceed with the necessary connections and further steps.

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

- C. Alcoholic Beverage License Application submitted by Carmen Evette Williams for a Malt Beverage/ Wine Package Retail Sales License for Family Dollar Stores of Georgia LLC., DBA Family Dollar #27927 (7306 Highway 21) located in a P-C-1 (Planned Neighborhood Business) Zoning District. City Manager Steve Davis explains that the alcohol beverage license under consideration is for the Family Dollar located near the Food Lion. He states that this license is strictly for beer and wine package sales, not by the drink. He states that Councilman Randerwala has recused himself from the vote and has left the dais. He states that the applicant meets all zoning and licensing requirements necessary for an alcohol license. There is no staff recommendation on this matter, as it is solely up to the council's discretion, but they do meet the qualifications approval.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson stated that they voted on this last year and agreed to stick to that decision. She states that she does not know if the business is unaware of the notice but feels as if the city already has enough alcohol available. She states that the location is within walking distance of a grocery store and a liquor store. City Manager Steve Davis explains that neither of the Dollar Generals have an alcohol license, but this does not violate the ordinance that the city passed. He states that the ordinance specifically limited the number of liquor stores, which applies to liquor sales, not beer or wine.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson states that she is not suggesting that they are doing anything wrong, but the city did what they could to limit liquor stores in the community.

Councilwoman Alston-Cone asked if the city should deny beer and wine licenses to new convenience stores in the city, even though they sell them elsewhere?

Councilwoman Alston-Cone states that in other cities like Atlanta, Family Dollar and Dollar General already sell beer and wine. It is not new, but it is just new to this city. She states that if the city wants to be progressive, then they should consider what is happening outside the city limits. She states that it is about convenience for residents.

Councilman Bright states that this is a new wave of things. He states that it is about convenience for the citizens.

City attorney Scott Robichaux explains that once an applicant is entitled to a license by right, there is a heightened level of consideration in the approval process. He states that the city's alcohol ordinance follows state guidelines, which require the city to provide applicants an additional opportunity for a full hearing before a denial. He states that this allows them to present extra evidence or make their case before a final decision is made, whether for an initial applicant or renewal. He states that since the current motion on the floor is to approve, if that motion does not pass, rather than making a motion to deny, he recommends that the matter is tabled until next month. This ensures that all proper procedures are followed, and applicants are allowed their due process. He states that otherwise, if the motion simply fails, it could lead to procedural complications. Tabling it would allow the city to fully comply with all requirements moving forward.

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

14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS

A. City Retirement Plan Update-2nd Reading

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

B. Alcohol Ordinance Update- 1st Reading

City Attorney Scott Robichaux explains that this is an update to ensure the city's ordinance remains consistent with the state law regarding alcohol regulations. He states that state laws on this matter frequently change and update, and this adjustment allows the city to properly regulate and permit the delivery of alcohol within city limits. He states that since state law already allows alcohol delivery, this clarification ensures that the city is aligned with those requirements. He states that this update is necessary to keep the city's ordinances clear and in compliance with current regulations.

City Manager states that deliveries can only be made in municipal and city boundaries.

C. Zoning Ordinance Update- 1st Reading

City Attorney Scott Robichaux explains that the city recently passed a new zoning ordinance that introduces updated procedures, protections, and guidelines reflecting what the city wants to see moving forward, rather than what was permitted under the old ordinance. He states that many properties were zoned or rezoned under the old ordinance and may still be following its outdated procedures. He explains that this update cleans up the grandfathering clause, allowing those properties to transition into the new zoning ordinance even if they were originally rezoned under the old rules. He states that it does not rezone any properties or apply old rules to new projects but instead, encourages properties governed by the previous ordinance to align with the new one, which was the overall intent of the zoning update. This is a procedural cleanup to ensure smoother application and enforcement of the zoning ordinance moving forward.

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilman Mark Stephens made a motion to adjourn to executive session. Second by Councilman Shawn Randerwala. Approved Unanimous.

Councilman Mark Stephens made a motion to reconvene regular session. Second by Councilman Thomas Barbee. Approved Unanimous.

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

16. ADJOURNMENT

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

Mayor Gary Norton

The foregoing minutes are true and correct and approved by me on this _____ day of _____, 2025.

ATTEST:

Zahnay Smoak, Clerk of Council