



**CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH**  
**CITY COUNCIL**  
**MARCH 20, 2025**

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**Council Meeting Room**

**Regular Session**

**7:00 PM**

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**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**

Councilman Rufus Bright Led the Prayer.

Cadet Major from Groves High School led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. ROLL CALL - CLERK OF COUNCIL**

<b>Attendee Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Status</b>
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 add Groves Junior ROTC under communications.

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

**5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

A) Chatham County Tax Commissioner, Sonya Jackson, was recognized.

B) Port Wentworth School Board member, Dr. Tonya Hall was recognized.

C) Savannah Chatham County Public Schools Superintendent , Dr. Denise Watts was recognized.

**6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS**

A. Avril Roy-Smith

Discussed the following topic(s):

- Thanked the City's Council for creating Proclamations for various occasions.
- Planning and Zoning

B. Laray Benton

Discussed the following topic(s):

- New Business

C. Georgia Benton

Discussed the following topic(s):

- New business
- Re-zoning

D. John Nixon

Discussed the following topic(s):

- Traffic concerns
- Zoning

**7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS**

A. Appointment to Planning and Zoning Board

City Council voted on Patrick Donivan being a part of the Planning and Zoning Board.

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

**8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**A. Regular Council Meeting Minutes - February 20, 2025**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Thomas Barbee, Council Member
<b>SECONDER:</b>	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 Lupus Awareness Month Proclamation, the Women's History Month Proclamation, the National Reading Month Proclamation, the National Social Work Month Proclamation, and the St. Patrick's Day Proclamation.

**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

- A. National League of Cities Centennial Under 40 Impact Award - Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson  
City Manager Steve Davis stated that Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson does a lot with the National League of Cities, and she was recently named to their Centennial Under 40 Impact Award. He states that this a very prestigious award and there are over 15,000 cities involved with this organization. He congratulated her for being one of the rising stars in the nation under 40. Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson thanked City manager Steve Davis for pointing out how many cities are represented and for acknowledging just how many cities, towns, and villages the National League of Cities represents and advocates for.
- B. Lupus Awareness Month Proclamation  
The Deloach Lupus Foundation came and accepted the proclamation.
- C. Women's History Month Proclamation  
Tax Commissioner Sonya Jackson thanked Mayor and Council for this proclamation in recognition of Women's History Month. She stated that serving in this capacity as the first African American female tax commissioner in this county has been both a privilege and a profound responsibility.
- D. National Reading Month Proclamation  
Dr. Tonya Hall thanked Mayor and Council. She states that she is a proud advocate for public education. She explains that it reminds her of the words on the Statue of Liberty: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. She states that the lamp is the light that opens the golden door just like education does for students.  
The school Superintendent expressed her appreciation for the City of Port Wentworth recognizing literacy efforts. She states that literacy is the districts North Star and readers are the future leaders. She states that when students read and speak proficiently, they will have a choice for their life.
- E. National Social Work Month Proclamation  
Rhianna Hardey, who represents Social Work Month as a Master Social Worker and Advocacy Coordinator at Brightside Advocacy, states that she trains and supports volunteers which is an opportunity that holds personal significance.
- F. St. Patrick's Day Proclamation

**G. Trail Plan Presentation- Kimley Horn**

Laura Ballock from Kimley Horn gave a presentation on the Anchor Trail Conceptual Plan. She states that over the past few years, they have been working with the city on numerous qualities of life and economic development initiatives. She states that these efforts have evolved through the downtown strategy and several transportation planning projects. She states that this planning project has been a collaborative effort with dedicated staff, who requested that she makes a presentation. She states that she is honored to share the progress and discuss the future ahead. Key points that were presented in the presentation includes:

- Consolidation of transportation methods
- Federal and state initiatives for changed transportation
- Key primary sidewalks/ paths
- Practices for a safe and accessible system
- Trail selection criteria and prioritization
- Location of the trail

City Manager Steve Davis states that the plan is the first step. He states that this is a document that is not only used to plan the trail but to get grant money. He states that the city will prioritize specific zones for the plan and will fund it over time.

**H. Groves Junior ROTC Presentation**

Cadets from Groves High School JROTC gave a presentation to Mayor and Council containing the following topics:

- What JROTC Stands for
- The purpose of JROTC
- Help shape future careers
- Issue of concern in Port Wentworth
- Residential parking
- Parking ordinance issues

**10. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

**11. CONSENT AGENDA**

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

- A. Mutual Aid MOU
- B. County’s Emergency Operations Plan

**12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. 2nd Public Hearing for Comprehensive Plan Revision  
 Laura Patterson from Pond gave a presentation on the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update. Key points that were presented in the presentation includes:
  - The Comprehensive Plan is a tool to guide growth and development for the city
  - Timeline of where the Comprehensive Plan is in the process (Draft Comprehensive Plan submittal- Public Hearing two)
  - Current conditions and trends, existing plan review, demographic overview, and existing conditions overview in Port Wentworth.
  - Community vision, engagement summary, vision/ goals, and needs/ opportunities
  - The vision- transportation, economics, housing, land use, and quality of life

City Manager asked when will be the final approval from Council?

Lara Ballot stated that they will have a better timeline once they receive more information.

  - Location of the trail

**13. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Sainamo, LLC, requests the approval of a General Site Plan "Shopping Center Development". PIN# 70037 01053, located on Old Richmond Road in the 3rd Council District. Zoned C-2.
  - A variance from required rear building setbacks was approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals on March 3, 2025.
  - The submitted General Site Plan conforms to the City of Port Wentworth Ordinances.
  - At the March 2, 2025 meeting, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the Concept Site Plan.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Thomas Barbee, Council Member
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
<b>AYES:</b>	Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright
<b>ABSTAINED:</b>	Shawn Randerwala

- B. JLG Professional A/E Services Proposal – Concession, Bleachers and Team Room Facilities

**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

**14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS**

A. Transfer of Land to the Port Wentworth Development Authority

**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. Elections Superintendent Resolution

**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

C. Alcohol Ordinance Update- 2nd Reading

**RESULT:** **APPROVED**  
**MOVER:** Thomas Barbee, Council Member  
**SECONDER:** Gabrielle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem

**AYES:** Gabrielle Nelson, Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Mark Stephens, Rufus Bright  
**ABSTAINED:** Shawn Randerwala

D. Zoning Ordinance Update- 2nd Reading

**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

**15. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- A. Litigation
- B. Personnel
- C. Real Estate

**16. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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Mayor Gary Norton

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

ATTEST:

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Zahnay Smoak, Clerk of Council