



**CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH**  
**CITY COUNCIL**  
**MAY 15, 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**

Councilman Rufus Bright Led the Prayer and 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**

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

**5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

**A. Citizens of the Year Awards- Golan S Frazier & Keandre Ellison**

City Manager Steve Davis presented the Citizens of the Year Award to Golan S. Frazier and Keandre Ellison for their bravery during a house fire on January 1st in the Newport subdivision. He stated that a home became engulfed in flames and these two gentlemen helped a family escape. He expressed his gratitude and thanked them for their heroism.

Councilwoman ArtLise Alston-Cone thanked the two men for saving her relatives who were involved in the fire.

**6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS**

A. Jenny Hynes

Discussed the following topic(s):

- Neighborhood watch Opportunity

B. Paul Cates

Discussed the following topic(s):

- Planning and Zoning

C. Carrie Smart

Discussed the following topic(s):

- Thanked the City for attending Willy Johnson's funeral

B. Georgia Benton

Discussed the following topic(s):

- Site Plan for StudioRes and Wood Spring Suites

**7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS**

Councilman Thomas Barbee made a motion to amend the agenda to add Tracy Saunders appointment under Elections and Appointments.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</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, Shawn Randerwala

A. Municipal Court Appointments

Accept the oaths of Judge Wilson and Solicitor Bradley

City Attorney Scott Robichaux explained that this is a formality and that there is no vote required. He stated that the oaths of the solicitor and the associate judge are officially included in the minutes and made part of the meeting packet.

B. Tracy Saunders appointment to the Zoning Board of Appeals

Councilwoman ArtLise Alston-Cone recommended Tracy Saunders for appointment to the city's Zoning Board of Appeals.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
----------------	-----------------------------

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

## 8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

### A. Regular Council Meeting Minutes - April 17, 2025

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

## 9. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

- A. Teacher Appreciation Week
- B. National Small Business Week
- C. National Police Week
- D. National Public Works Week
- E. National Foster Care Month
- F. Maternal Health Month Proclamation

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson read the Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation, National Small Business Week Proclamation, National Police Week Proclamation, National Public Works Week Proclamation, the National Foster Care Month Proclamation, and the Maternal Health Month Proclamation.

### A. National Foster Care Month

Mandy Roberts, the CASA Program Director with Brightside Child and Family Advocacy explained that this Program is one of three programs under Brightside. She states that volunteers are trained and supported to advocate for children in foster care. She states that over 300 children are in care and need more volunteers and donations to sustain work.

### B. Maternity Health Month

Dr. Dina Linfoot, a practicing OBGYN at Memorial Hospital and teacher at the medical school, states that Maternal health is a critical issue especially in Georgia, where maternity care deserts are widespread and labor and delivery units are closing which forces women to travel long distances for care. She states

that this strain impacts physicians, residents, and staff at Memorial due to increased patient transfers. She states that new legislation has been passed to help improve access to care for women across the state and is truly grateful.

#### C. National Public Works Week

Councilman Mark Stephens expressed his gratitude for all Public Works and the Police Department does, especially during challenging times of Debbie and Elaine.

City Manager Steve Davis stated that the Public Works Department, one of the city's largest departments, handles key infrastructure from water and sewer to potholes and grass cutting. He stated that they have added staff, equipment, and started ditch dredging. He states that during a recent storm with over five inches of rain, there was no downtown flooding, proof of their hard work. He states that they have launched a rotating night shift to clean long-neglected intersections. He thanked Reggie Bush for his team's 20–30-minute response and Omar Senati-Martinez for his leadership across all divisions.

#### D. National Police Week

City Manager Steve Davis recognized the work that the police department has done over the past few years. He states that the city has established a Professional Standards Division, including internal affairs, and strengthened code enforcement. He states that the city now has a state-of-the-art Police Guardian Training Facility for training on active shooter scenarios, de-escalation, and community interactions using 3D scanned environments. He states that the city has been named one of the twenty safest cities in Georgia thanks to these efforts.

City Manager Steve Davis shared several upcoming community events and announcements:

- Councilwoman Alston-Cone's Citizens Advisory Group Meeting: May 20
- Councilwoman Alston-Cone's Citizens Input Council Meeting: June
- District 8 Town Hall (Commissioner Marsha): Groves High School Auditorium at 6:00PM
- City Hall Closed for Memorial Day: May 26
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Talent Show: May 30
- Food Truck Friday starts: May 30 in front of City Hall
- Will continue every other week throughout the summer
- Planning and Commission Meeting: June 2
- City Council Meeting: June 12
- Father's Day: June 15
- Fire Station Headquarters Ribbon Cutting: Tentative- June 18 (May move to June 23)
- City Hall closed for Juneteenth: June 19

- Juneteenth Celebration: June 20
- Blood Drive: June 23 at the new fire station

Councilman Rufus Bright thanked Tiffany Lancaster for everything that the Parks and Recreation Department has done for the city.

## 10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council Member Bright made a motion to Approve , which was seconded by Council Member Stephens. Vote was unanimous.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Rufus Bright, 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

## 11. CONSENT AGENDA

## 12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Amend the City of Port Wentworth Sign Ordinance 2nd Reading

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

**ACTION**

City Manager Steve Davis states that each agenda include a policy paper and the full ordinance language within the agenda packet. He states what appears on the agenda itself is just the item titles.

<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

## 13. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Peter Shoenauer, as Agent for Sainamo, LLC, requests the approval of a Concept Site Plan

"StudioRes, Woodspring Suites". PIN#s 70976B 01003 & 70976B 01018, 70976B 01002, 70976 02028, located off Highway 21 in the 1st Council District. Zoned C-1. City Planner Katie Dunnigan stated the applicant is requesting approval of a concept site plan for StudioRes and Woodspring Suites which are two separate hotel buildings to be developed off Highway 21. She stated that the proposed hotels will include 122 rooms along with associated amenities.

Councilman Shawn Randerwala recused himself from the dais during this item.

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

- B. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by Phillip McCorkle as Agent for Elaine Seabolt, requesting to rezone 65.83 acres from R-1 to R-5, to allow for multi-family residential development. PIN #s 70978 01038, 70978 01001H, 70978 01001G, located in the 2nd Council District, off Meinhard Road. 1st Reading.

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

Philip McCorkle states that this is a zoning request and not a site plan. He stated that they understand that any future development will require significant investment such as extending water and sewer and addressing traffic improvements. He stated that the R5 zoning allows for a mix of housing types.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson stated that she is excited to see multi-family homes in the city.

Councilman Mark Stephens stated that this is another growth opportunity not only for the city but for the new neighborhood as well. He stated that this is a chance to bring more people into the area.

#### **14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS**

City Manager Steve Davis explained that during a city-wide zoning review, about 20 businesses operating in areas not properly zoned for their use were found. He stated that the effort involved planning staff, code enforcement, administration, and development services. He stated that each site was reviewed and the appropriate zoning under current ordinances was identified. He stated that these changes were not requested by property owners but were all properly notified.

- A. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 1.42 acres from R-1 to C-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70976 01018, located in the 2nd Council District, at 711 Hwy 30. 1st Reading

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

City manager Steve Davis stated that Wood's Seafood should be in commercial zoning.

- B. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone .9 acres from R-1 to C-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70975 02007, located in the 1st Council District, at 7512 Highway 21. 1st Reading

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

City manager Steve Davis stated that this property is currently zoned R5 but has been operating as an animal hospital for approximately 12 years. He stated that it needs to be rezoned to commercial to match its current use. He stated that it is located along highway 21.

- C. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone +/- 5.26 acres from R-1 to C-2, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN #s 70976 02031, 70976 02030, portion of former 70976 02003 & 70976B 01001B, located in the 1st Council District, on Highway 30. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City manager Steve Davis stated that this property is a nursery currently zoned residential, but it should be commercial given its location along Highway 30.
- D. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 10.77 acres from C-2 to R-5, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70037 01012, located in the 3rd Council District, at 1133 Coldbrook Station Circle. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City manager Steve Davis stated that this is currently zoned commercial but should be residential, specifically R5 for multifamily use.
- E. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 14 acres from C-2 to R-5, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70037 01051, located in the 3rd Council District, at 501 Old Richmond Road.1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City manager Steve Davis stated that this property which is located behind City Hall, is currently zoned C2 but should be R5 to reflect its long-standing multifamily use.
- F. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone +/- 4 acres from SPLIT zoning (C-2/R-1) to C-2, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70001 04005, located in the 4th Council District, at 6620 Hwy 21. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City manager Steve Davis stated that the property was originally zoned C2, but operations have expanded onto two adjacent residential parcels. He states that the business has been operating there for decades, and this change would rezone the residential portion to C2 to bring the entire site into compliance.
- G. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 2.5 acres from R-4 to I-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70015 01001, located in the 4th Council District, at 604 S Coastal Highway. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City manager Steve Davis stated that this property, which is located near the sugar refinery, is part of the Port Authority and is currently zoned residential but it should be industrial.
- H. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone .06 acres from R-1 to C-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70010 13025, located in the 4th Council District, at 808 Crossgate Road. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City manager Steve Davis stated that this is a house currently being used as a commercial office space. He states that it was originally part of the property sold to Dollar General and is now an operating business. He states that it should be rezoned to C1 to reflect its current use.
- I. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone .14 acres from R-1 to C-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70010 13011, located in the 4th Council District, at 101 S Coastal Hwy. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City manager Steve Davis stated that this is an operating business currently in a residential zone. He states that it aligns with the future land use map and should be zoned commercial.
- J. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone +/- 1 acre from R-4 to C-2, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70010 02002, located in the 4th Council District, at 1 Dixie St. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City Attorney Scott Robichaux explained that the remaining agenda items include rezoning requests paired with special use permits. He states that since they go together, they can be combined into a single public hearing to save time. For example, items J and K, L and M can be grouped and presented together.

City Manager Steve Davis states that this property is part of a cluster of sites that are currently zoned residential but have been operating commercially for decades. He states that this one is a self-storage facility, which requires a special use permit under the zoning code to bring it into compliance.

- K. A Special Use Permit Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to allow a mobile storage business in the C-2 zoning district. PIN # 70010 02002, located in the 4th Council District, at 1 Dixie St. Current zoning R-4, proposed zoning C-2. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- L. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 1.8 acres from R-4 to C-2, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70010 02001, located in the 4th Council District, at 1000 Dorset Rd. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City Manager Steve Davis states that this is a senior assisted living facility that has been operating for decades. He states that it needs to be rezoned to commercial, and because it is assisted living use, it also requires a special use permit.
- M. A Special Use Permit Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to allow a a Nursing Home in the C-2 zoning district. PIN # 70010 02001, located in the 4th Council District, at 1000 Dorset Rd. Current zoning R-4, proposed zoning C-2. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- N. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 1 acre from R-1 to C-2, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 71017 02010, located in the 3rd Council District, at 101 Hodgeville Rd. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City Manager Steve Davis states that this is an active gas station at the corner of Highway 30 and Hodgeville. He states that it has been operating for some time and because it is a gas station, it requires a special use permit.
- O. A Special Use Permit Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to allow a Vehicle Service Station (Gas Station) in the C-2 zoning district. PIN # 71017 02010, located in the 3rd Council District, at 101 Hodgeville Rd. Current zoning R-1, proposed zoning C-2. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- P. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 19.3 acre from C-3 to I-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70035 01002, located in the 2nd Council District, at 6232 Hwy 21. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City Manager Steve Davis states that this property currently has interstate commercial-type zoning, but it is operating as a warehouse and needs to be zoned industrial.
- Q. A Special Use Permit Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to allow Warehousing in the I-1 zoning district. PIN # 70035 01002, located in the 2nd Council District, at 6232 Hwy 21. Current zoning C-3, proposed zoning I-1. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- R. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone .86 acres from R-4 to C-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70010 04005, located in the 4th Council District, at 5 Birkenhead Rd. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**
- City Manager Steve Davis states that this is part of the same residential zone. He states that it's Sexton Hall Funeral Home, which has been operating for decades needs to be rezoned to C1 with a special use permit for funeral home operations.
- S. A Special Use Permit Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to allow a Funeral Home in the C-1 zoning district. PIN # 70010 04005, located in the 4th Council District, at 5 Birkenhead Rd. Current zoning R-4, proposed zoning C-1. 1st Reading
- **PUBLIC HEARING**

- T. A Zoning Map Amendment Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone +/- 5.76 acres from R-4 to C-2, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN #s 70906 01038 & 70906 01037, located in the 1st Council District, at 8901 Highway 21. 1st Reading

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

City Manager Steve Davis states that this is a self-storage Stop and Store that has been operating for many years. He states it was rezoned as part of a larger parcel tied to the adjacent Rice Creek apartments. He states it needs C2 zoning with a special use permit.

City Manager Steve Davis states that this is a city-initiated rezoning with no involvement from the property owner. The site currently contains a retention pond with no plans for expansion. He states that any future development would still require going through the full permitting process.

Councilman Thomas Barbee states that the city is not looking to expand. He states that it is an administrative zoning update.

Councilwoman Artlise Alston-Cone asked if the Special Use Permit covers expansion.

City Manager Steve Davis states that the Special Use Permit only applies to the use as a self-storage facility, not to any expansion. He states that the requirement was added during last year's zoning ordinance update to ensure future self-storage rezonings go through an extra review step.

- U. A Special Use Permit Application has been submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to allow Self-Storage in the C-2 zoning district. PIN # 70906 01038 & 70906 01037, located in the 1st Council District, at 8901 Hwy 21. Current zoning R-4, proposed zoning C-2. 1st Reading

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

## **15. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

### **A. Litigation**

### **B. Personnel**

### **C. Real Estate**

Councilman Bright made a motion to adjourn to executive session. Second by Councilman Mark Stephens.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson made a motion to reconvene, seconded by Councilwoman Alston-Cone.

City Attorney Scott Robichaux stated that the city is working on a land swap deal with a developer at the corner of Highway 21 and Rice Creek. He states that each party would exchange 0.7 acres of land. He states that the swap would give the developer room for a larger pond and move their development farther from Highway 21, which helps with future expansion plans. He states that in return, the city would gain green space that could be used to connect walking trails to a nearby neighborhood. He states that this exchange is legal under Georgia Law as long as both sides receive equal or greater value. He states that before final approval, a survey and appraisal need to be completed, and the deal must receive legal clearance.

Councilman Shawn Randerwala made a motion to approve the land swap stated by the city attorney contingent upon legal approval, and it was second by councilman Rufus Bright. Approved Unanimous.

Councilman Mark Stephens made a motion to approve Resolution R25-05-01, seconded by Councilman Rufus Bright.

## **16. ADJOURNMENT**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Gabrielle Nelson, 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

---

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