



CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH
CITY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 16, 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

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

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

5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

A. Senior Center Presentation- Barbera Harris

Barbera Harris and Patsy Grainger thanked Council for their partnership with the Port Wentworth Senior Citizens Center.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS

A. Georgia Benton

Discussed the following topics:

- Rice Hope Groundbreaking
- Fire Station Concerns

B. Virginia Hines

Discussed the following topics:

- Thanked police for assisting with alligator
- Traffic Congestion on 21

C. Joann Landing

Discussed the following topics:

- Pine Forest concerns

7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

A. Regular Council Meeting Minutes- September 18, 2025

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, 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. Domestic Violence Awareness Month

B. National Down Syndrome Awareness Month

C. Breast Cancer Awareness Month

D. National Disability Employment Awareness Month

E. Retired Educators Day

F. City Manager Update

Police Chief, Kerry Thomas, recognized officer Sykes, Bieber, and David for their 5 years of service with the City of Port Wentworth.

City Manager Steve Davis recognized Deputy City Manager Omar Senati-Martinez for his 10 years of service with the city. He began his career as an inspector in Development Services, advanced to department head, and now oversees a division that includes Permitting, Inspections, Planning and Zoning, Public Works, and Development Services. Davis Highlighted his background as a Civil Engineer, his management of five departments and the city's largest budget.

Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson presented the Domestic Violence Awareness Month Proclamation, National Down Syndrome Awareness Month Proclamation, Breast Cancer Awareness Month Proclamation, National Disability Employment Awareness Month Proclamation, and the Retired Educators Day Proclamation.

Shannon Dates, CEO of Safe Shelter, and Daisy Hernandez, Director of Outreach and Community Education, gave a brief overview of their organizations. Shannon Dates stated that Safe Shelter has served the community for 46 years as the second largest domestic violence shelter in Georgia, assisting about 1,800 individuals each year without city or county funding. Daisy Hernandez stated that their outreach office filed 212 protective orders last year related to domestic, family, and dating violence. They thanked the police officers and city officials for their support and expressed appreciation for recognition.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nelson shared that she is a proud member of this organization. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve with the organization under Mrs. Bates leadership.

Representatives from the Low Country Down Syndrome Society, including her husband and their daughter Laney, introduced themselves as the co-founders of the organization, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary and 20th Buddy Walk this year. She shared that the group began as a family support network and has grown into a community resource dedicated to raising awareness and promoting inclusion for individuals with Down Syndrome. She expressed gratitude to the community for its continued support and emphasized the importance of recognizing that individuals with down syndrome are capable, valued members of society.

Shemeika Simmons, founder of GoPaint365, stated that it began 10 years ago to raise breast cancer awareness and has since expanded its mission to address health care disparities. She states that the organization promotes mammograms and advocates for health care access for all. She announced upcoming events, including a Domestic Violence and Breast Cancer Awareness Runway Show and the annual Chatham Holiday Ball on December 20.

A representative from EmployAbility thanked the Council for recognizing the value and contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce and community. He shared that EmployAbility has served the region for nearly 75 years, providing community integration, skill development, job placement, and employment support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Bulloch, Bryan, Effingham, Liberty, Chatham, and Camden County. He stated that the organization currently serves over 500 individuals and expressed appreciation for the community's ongoing support.

Kathy Grant, President of the Chatham Retired Educators, as well as President-Elect Dr. Pamela West, the past president Mrs. Simmons, Deborah Brown White, and Dr. Tonya Hall, expressed appreciation for the Proclamation and stated that the organization supports local schools in Savannah by providing classroom supplies, and offering encouragement to teachers during planning days. She stated that as former educators, their mission is to ensure current teachers know they are supported and not alone in their work.

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

- Fall Festival: October 30
- Trunk or Treat: October 31
- Free Basketball Clinic hosted by the Savannah Steel Women's League: November 1
- ZBA Board Meeting: November 3
- Grand Opening of Point Grand Apartments: November 4
- Veterans Day Parade: November 11
- Basketball Season Registration: Open through November 15
- Thanksgiving Sports Clinic: November 24- November 26
- Teen Skate Night: November 21

- Annual Tree Lighting: December 5
- Christmas Parade: December 6

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

11. CONSENT AGENDA

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Consideration of the Second Reading for a Zoning Map Amendment Application submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 34 acres from R-4 to R-5, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70976 02021, located in the 3rd Council District, at 50 Newport Blvd.

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

- B. Consideration of the Second Reading for a Zoning Map Amendment Application submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone 31 acres from R-4 to R-5, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70907 01003, located in the 1st Council District, at 7450 Highway 21.

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

- C. Consideration of the Second Reading for a Zoning Map Amendment Application submitted by the City of Port Wentworth, requesting to rezone .4 acres from R-4 to C-1, for the purpose of land use conformance. PIN # 70010 04002 & 70010 04002L, located in the 4th Council District, at 3 Birkenhead St.

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

13. NEW BUSINESS

A. Leo Port Wentworth Development Agreement

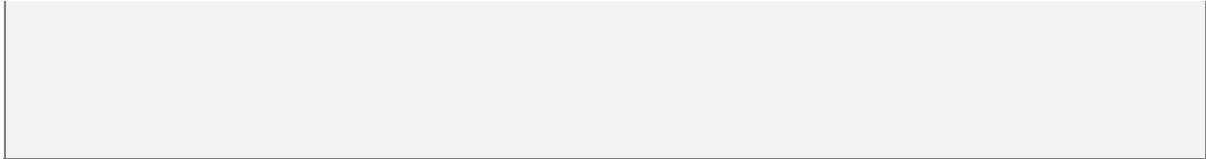
City manager Steve Davis stated that the development will connect to the city’s water, sewer, and stormwater systems and that a development agreement has been established. He explained that as part of the agreement, the developer will extend a 12-inch water main from the site to Benton Boulevard along Highway 30, creating a connection to properties that previously lacked water and sewer access. He stated that the developer’s contribution, valued at approximately \$500,000, represents a significant concession to the city and recommended approval.

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. Consideration of the approval of a Concept Site Plan application submitted by Integrity Engineering & Development Services, Inc., as Agent for Publix Super Markets, Inc., for "McDonald's", PIN# 70906 04088, located at 1 Supermarket Lane in the 4th Council District. Zoned PUD (Commercial). City Planner Katie Dunnigan presented a concept site plan for a McDonalds restaurant to be located at the corner of Highway 21, with both access points located on Supermarket Lane.

City Manager Steve Davis stated that McDonalds worked closely with city staff to design an exterior and architectural style that complements the surrounding development. He states that the Planning Commission recommends approval. He states that the project will be a visually appealing and valuable addition to the community.

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. The Planning Commission recommends the approval of a Zoning Map Amendment Application

City Planner Katie Dunnigan stated that C-2 zoning represents intermediate-intensity commercial zoning intended to accommodate a range of retail, office, and service uses that typically have easy access to major roadways. She explained that the concept provided by the applicant is not a solid plan, but rather an example to illustrate how the space could be developed. She states that the plan shows two access points onto Bonney Bridge Road, and the Planning Commission has recommended approval.

City Manager Steve Davis explained that the site development will require a retention wall located just below the railroad area. He stated that the project will require approval from the railroad, GDOT, and a stamped engineer’s certification for the retention design. He stated that it is a retention wall, not a berm.

Mayor Gary Norton asked if the entrance would be near the overpass? City Manager Steve Davis stated that the entrance is in front of 21.

The developer stated that C-2 zoning allows for medium-intensity commercial uses as outlined in the city’s ordinance and that warehousing is not a permitted use within this district.

Councilman Thomas Barbee stated that it is not a warehouse.

Councilwoman ArtLise Alston-Cone asked on the future land map, how is this rezoned? City Planner Katie Dunnigan stated that the future land map identifies it as industrial.

14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

Councilman Mark Stephens made a motion to adjourn to executive session, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson.

Councilman Mark Stephens made a motion to approve Resolution R-25-10-02 seconded by Councilman Rufus Bright.

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

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

16. ADJOURNMENT

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

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