



CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH
CITY COUNCIL
JANUARY 15, 2026

Council Meeting Room

Regular Session

7:00 PM

7224 GA HIGHWAY 21
PORT WENTWORTH, GA 31407

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

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

5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

City Attorney Scott Robichaux acknowledged and welcomed members of the judiciary. Those recognized were Judge Carolyn Montgomery who is the Chief Magistrate of Bryan County, Judge Billy Tomlison of Bryan County State Court, Judge Joe Huffman who is the Chief Judge of Chatham County Recorder's Court, Judge Crystal Harmon of Chatham County Recorder's Court, Judge Laura Singleton of Chatham County Juvenile Court, Judge Ty Wilson of Port Wentworth, and Judge Donald Montgomery of State Court Judge in Bryan County.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS

7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

A. City Council Rules and Regulations

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

B. Resolution To Appoint Mayor Pro-Tem

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

C. Resolution To Appoint Chief Judge And Associate Judge Of The Port Wentworth Municipal Court

Chief Judge Laura Singleton explained her professional experiences with the nominees, highlighting their integrity, discretion, and ability to remain calm under pressure.

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

D. Resolution to Reconstitute the City's Downtown Development Authority, and to Appoint Directors to Same

City Manager Steve Davis stated that the Downtown Development Authority is being proposed for reconstitution. Multiple members that were presented are listed below:

Councilman Shawn Randerwala, Hilton Fordham, Keyur Patel, Kevin Thomas, and Cindy Patel

City Attorney Scott Robichaux stated that councilman Randerwala resigned from the Port Wentworth Development Authority to be eligible for appointment to the Downtown Development Authority, as he could not serve on both. It was noted that his resignation is official and was mentioned because his name is included among the nominations for appointments to the Downtown Development Authority.

Councilman Mark Stephens made a motion to reconstitute the DDA and the names that are nominated, seconded by Councilman Rufus Bright.

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

E. Planning and Zoning Board Appointments

City Manager Steve Davis stated that the Planning and Zoning Board is established by ordinance to review zoning applications and site plan approvals. He stated that Adam Alday has been nominated to serve on the board. He also stated that the zoning ordinance includes a codified position for the Public Works Director, Reginald Bush, to serve on the planning and zoning board.

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

F. Zoning Board of Appeals Appointments

City Manager Steve Davis stated that the Planning and Zoning Board serves as an advisory body to City Council, while the Zoning Board of Appeals is a decision-making body that approves variances and hears disputes between administration and developers. He also stated that the two nominees for the Zoning Board of Appeals are Melwin Turner and Hilton Fordham.

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

8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

A. Regular Council Meeting Minutes- December 18, 2025

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

9. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

- A. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Proclamation
- B. National Blood Donor Month Proclamation
- C. City Manager Update

Mayor Pro-Tem Gabrielle Nelson presented the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Proclamation and the National blood Donor Month Proclamation.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Proclamation

President of the Greater Savannah Black Chamber of Commerce, Moncello Stewart, stated that there are approximately 270 parade entries expected, making for a long and cold day. He stated that he has volunteered with the parade for 17 years and was honored this year to be selected as parade marshal and trailblazer.

National Blood Donor Month Proclamation

Michelle Dubois-Gess stated that she is honored to be present and thanked the city for its partnership with The Blood Connection. She explained that The Blood Connection relies on community support to maintain an adequate blood supply for local hospitals and emphasized that the need for blood is constant. She noted that blood transfusions are required every two seconds and that donations benefit a wide range of patients, including cancer patients. She explained that blood and platelets have limited shelf lives, making regular donations critical. She also stated that donating blood is safe, healthy, and can save up to three lives per donation.

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

- Freeze Warning: Temperatures below 30°F with high winds; no outdoor burning advised
- Adult Basketball League: Registration open; season begins January 28
- Coaches vs. Fire Department Basketball Game: January 17
- Coffee with Council: Saturday
- Goodwill Drop-Off Day: January 22
- Line Dancing Nights: Upcoming (dates to be announced)

- Skate Nights: Upcoming (dates to be announced)
- City Hall Closed:
 - January 19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 - February 16 – Presidents’ Day
- Savannah–Chatham Day at the Capitol: February 4
- Planning and Zoning Meeting: February 2
- Royal Sneaker Ball (Valentine’s Dance): February 13

Mayor Pro Tem Nelson stated that the city has many opportunities available for its youth and emphasized the importance of recognizing the assistant directors and staff, expressing her sincere appreciation for all that they do. She noted that whenever staff is asked to help, they step up and do it, and that their efforts do not go unnoticed. She added that it is always a lot of fun to watch them in action. She reminded everyone that basketball team pictures are scheduled for Saturday morning at 8:00 a.m. at the gym.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

11. CONSENT AGENDA

City Manager Steve Davis stated that the Effingham County Inmate Intergovernmental Agreement was the extension or renewal of with Effingham County, which is an amendment to the existing contract, includes no increase in fees, and is for a one-year term. He also stated that the canal maintenance agreement with Chatham County is a five-year agreement and involves no cost to the city.

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

- A. Effingham County Inmate Intergovernmental Agreement - Renewal
- B. Chatham County Canal Maintenance Agreement - Renewal

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

13. NEW BUSINESS

- A. The Planning Commission recommends the approval of a Zoning Map Amendment Application, submitted by Timothy Jones, requesting to rezone 2.52 acres from R-1 to C-1, to allow for general office use. PIN # 70978 04001B, located in the 3rd Council District, at 630 Meinhard Road. City Planner Katie Dunnigan stated that the request is to rezone approximately 2.5 acres from R-1 to C-1 to allow conversion of an existing 1,900-square-foot home into leased office space. She stated that the proposed tenant would not have customers on site and that the property, located next to WCE, which received a variance last year to operate a contractor facility, remains consistent with the surrounding residential character. She stated that there are no current plans for site improvements or expansion. She added that the Planning Commission recommends approval with conditions, including removal of the existing mobile home prior to issuance of a business license, a meeting between the business operator and Development Services to ensure compliance for office use, and that any future site improvements be preceded by a pre-application meeting.

- B. Tax Anticipation Note (TAN)
City Manager Steve Davis stated that this is a tax anticipation note, which under Georgia Law allows local governments, municipalities, and counties to issue short-term debt based on projected tax revenue for the year. He stated that is a maximum 12-month loan that must be repaid within the same calendar year and is based on property tax collections and projections. He stated that the purpose of the note is to help with cash flow for ongoing projects, including the Anchor Park project.

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

14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

16. ADJOURNMENT

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

Mayor Tracy Saunders

The foregoing minutes are true and correct and approved by me on this _____ day of _____, 2026.

ATTEST:

Zahnay Smoak, Clerk of Council