CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH

CITY COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 17, 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. ROLL CALL - CLERK OF COUNCIL

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Tracy Saunders	Mayor	Present
Thomas Barbee	Council Member	Present
ArtLise Alston-Cone	Council Member	Present
Rufus Bright	Council Member	Present
Shawn Randerwala	Council Member	Present
Gabrielle Nelson	Mayor Pro Tem	Absent
Mark Stephens	Council Member	Absent

3. PRAYER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Rufus Bright led the prayer and pledge of allegiance.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

City Attorney Scott Robichaux requested the removal of Items 11B and 11C for further internal discussion. He also requested consideration of moving the October City Council meeting from October 15 to October 22, adding a right-of-way item, and adding Item 11F regarding a GDOT request for right-of-way.

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

5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS & ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

Police Chief Kerry Thomas recognized Cindy Sand for her 16½ years of dedicated service to the City and Police Department. He stated that her efficiency, compassion, empathy, and commitment to the City's mission were highlighted, with her described as a "jewel" and a valued member of the department.

Police Chief Thomas recognized Captain Brown for five years of dedicated service to the Police Department. Her professionalism, knowledge, and commitment to the agency were highlighted, including her work overseeing off-duty assignments, assisting with various department needs, conducting professional investigations, and providing guidance to the team.

6. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

A. National Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation
B. National Suicide Prevention Month Proclamation
C. National Service Dog Month Proclamation
D. Years of Service Recognition
E. Fire Department- ISO 2 Rating Announcement
F. City Manager Update

Mayor Tracy Saunders presented the National Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation, the National Suicide Prevention Month Proclamation, and the National Service Dog Month Proclamation.

National Hispanic Heritage Month

The President of the Metropolitan Savannah Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Alfonso Ribot, thanked the City Council for recognizing the achievements and contributions of Hispanics throughout the region.

Fire Chief Lance Moore recognized Captain Jessica Poundstone for 10 years of service and Lieutenants Roden Thomas and Haywood for five years of service.

Fire Chief Moore recognized the City's achievement of an ISO Class 2 rating and thanked the City Manager, staff, CFO, and City employees for their hard work and contributions to the accomplishment. He stated that the rating places the City among approximately the top seven percent of communities nationwide.

City Manager Steve Davis highlighted the Fire Department's achievement of an ISO Class 2 rating and the significant investment made in the department. He stated that the improved rating reflects factors including response times, medical personnel, the Fire Marshal Division, EMS Director, and on-staff paramedic. He explained the potential financial benefit to Port Wentworth homeowners, as improved ISO ratings can positively impact homeowners insurance costs.

City Manager Davis discussed the opening of the VyStar Pavilion and Ice Cove and stated that it is an historic moment and watershed moment for the city. He stated that approximately 3,500 residents and visitors attended the ribbon-cutting event. He stated that the facilities will provide opportunities for recreation, entertainment, athletics, and community gatherings. He recognized the city staff, project partners, contractors, and others who contributed to the project, emphasizing the significant work involved in developing the 165-acre site from raw land.

City manager Davis shared several upcoming community events and announcements:

- 09/18/26 - Line Dancing - Gym - 6:00pm -7:30pm
- 09/24/26 - 12U Homecoming Game 6pm - Mobley Park
- 09/29/26 - 8U & 10U Homecoming Game - 6:00pm /7:15pm - Mol
- 10/03/26 - Sav Cav Adult Basketball Game - 4:00pm - Gym
- 10/03/26 - First Tee Golf Clinic - (ages 5-12 - NO Equipment Needed) Festival Site 9:30
- 10/04/26 - Sav Cav Adult Basketball Game - 4:00pm - Gym
- 10/09/26 - Line Dancing - Gym - 6:00pm - 7:30pm
- 10/16/26 - Fall Festival - Festival Site - 5:30pm - 9:00 pm
- 10/23/26 - Line Dancing - Gym - 6:00pm - 7:30pm
- 10/24/26 - Sav Cav Adult Basketball Game - 12pm - Gym

- 10/27 & 28 - Haunted Experience - Gym - 6:30pm - 9:00pm
- August 28-30: 200x85 Tier 1 Boys Tournament
- September 25-27: 200x85 Tier 2 Boys Tournament
- October 9-11: MyHockey Tournaments
- October 16-18: Zawyer 8U Southern Series
- October 23-25: Headbangers Adult Hockey Tournament
- October 23-25: Big Bear Youth Tournament
- November 6-8: Hockey Time Veterans Day Tournament
- November 20-22: 200x85 Tier 1 Girls Tournament
- December 4-6: Hockey Time Holiday Tournament
- December 11-13: ICS Hockey Tournament
- 09/25/26 - La Fiesta Hispana - 5:30pm - 9:00pm
- October 3, 2026 - Whiskey Meyer - 6:30pm
- October 6, 2026 - Caamp Live - 7:00pm
- October 9, 2026 - ZZ Top - 7:00pm
- October 10, 2026 - Garba Festival 6:30pm -12:00am
- October 17, 2026 - Ty Meyers - 7:30pm
- November 4, 2026 - Motionless in White 6:30pm
- April 8, 2027 - Third Day

Councilman Thomas Barbee asked when the opening date of the restaurant will be?

City Manager Davis stated the opening of the restaurant will take place September 24, 2026.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS

A. Isaac Wright
Discussed the following topic:
- Thanked the Police Department

8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

A. Regular Council Meeting Minutes- August 20, 2026

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

9. CONSENT AGENDA

City Manager Steve Davis stated that the Comprehensive Plan amendment was described as an administrative update to reflect a date change and the new Mayor's signature. He stated that the City's automatic aid agreement is being expanded to include Pooler and Bloomingdale, in addition to the existing partnership with Garden City, allowing departments to provide immediate assistance when units are already deployed and supporting the City's ISO rating.

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

A. Approval of administrative edits to the 2026-2031 Comprehensive Plan Revision.

B. Agreement for Fire Service Automatic Aid

C. Georgia Recreation and Parks Association (GRPA) MOU

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

11. NEW BUSINESS

A. The City of Port Wentworth proposes to to amend the City of Port Wentworth Code of Ordinances, Zoning Ordinances.

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

City Attorney Scott Robichaux presented a proposed update to the zoning ordinance consisting of four amendments. The first clarifies that similar land uses not specifically defined in the ordinance would require a special use permit rather than being permitted by right. The second establishes definitions and general regulations for wireless communication towers, requiring special use approval while complying with federal regulations. The third establishes definitions and regulations for private detention centers and detention facilities for unaccompanied minors. The fourth updates regulations for manufactured homes and mobile home communities, following the City's previously established moratorium.

Councilwoman ArtLise Alston-Cone asked the stage of construction the city is at with building the Moratorium.

City Attorney Robichaux stated that the current moratorium on manufactured homes and detention centers are scheduled to expire on October 31.

B. Consideration for the approval of a Special Use Permit application, for a drive-through bank, has been submitted by Gaskins and LeCraw as Agent for WMG Development, for "Fifth Third Bank". PIN # 70906 04044, located in the 4th Council District on Highway 21 and Market Blvd, zoned PUD (Rice Hope - Commercial).

- **PUBLIC HEARING**

RESULT:	**REMOVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Thomas Barbee, Council Member
SECONDER:	Rufus Bright, Council Member
AYES:	Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

C. A request for approval of a Concept Site Plan has been submitted by Gaskins and LeCraw as Agent for WMG Development, for "Fifth Third Bank". PIN # 70906 04044, located in the 4th Council District on Highway 21 and Market Blvd, zoned PUD (Rice Hope - Commercial).

RESULT:	**REMOVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Thomas Barbee, Council Member
SECONDER:	Rufus Bright, Council Member
AYES:	Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, Rufus Bright, Shawn Randerwala

D. A request for approval of a Concept Site Plan has been submitted by The Sunshine House, for "Foundations Early Learning Center". PIN # 70906 04060, located in the 4th Council District on 205 Mulberry Blvd, zoned PUD (Rice Hope - Commercial).
City Planner Katie Dunnigan presented a request for approval of a concept site plan for a daycare center located in the Rice Hope community near the Mulberry Boulevard roundabout. She stated that the proposed development includes a 12,000-square-foot building and multiple playgrounds.

City Manager Steve Davis provided additional details regarding the proposed daycare center, stating that the entrance was designed to serve two lots, allowing for only one access point onto the roundabout. He also emphasized the need for additional daycare facilities in the area due to long waiting lists and stated that the proposed location would be a great addition to the community.

Councilman Shawn Randerwala asked if the road connected to the roundabout will be dedicated to the City or Private property?

City Manager Davis stated that an agreement will have to be created.

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

E. Discussion to move the October City Council Meeting from October 15, 2026 to October 22, 2026

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

F. Approval of GDOT request for right-of-way to maintain a culvert
City Manager Steve Davis provided an update on the Bonnie Bridge Road culvert project, stating that the City has worked diligently with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for several years to address right-of-way challenges involving Norfolk Southern, the City, and the State. He emphasized the importance of the box culvert installation due to recurring road closures during heavy rainfall and hurricanes.

City Attorney Scott Robichaux explained that the required right-of-way deed and property owner's affidavit are standard GDOT documents necessary to move the project forward.

Mayor Tracy Saunders asked how many pieces of property are near the culvert?

City Manager stated that there is one culvert on each side.

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

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Litigation
B. Personnel
C. Real Estate
There was no Executive Session.

13. ADJOURNMENT

RESULT:	**APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	ArtLise Alston-Cone, Council Member
SECONDER:	Rufus Bright, Council Member
AYES:	Thomas Barbee, ArtLise Alston-Cone, 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