



CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH

CITY COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

Council Meeting Room

Regular Meeting

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

Council Member Rufus Bright led in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL - CLERK OF COUNCIL

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Gary Norton	Mayor	Present	
Thomas Barbee	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	
Jo Smith	Council Member	Present	
Gabrielle Nelson	Council Member	Present	
Mark Stephens	Council Member	Present	
Rufus Bright	Council Member	Present	
Glenn Jones	Council Member	Present	

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A.

The agenda was approved with the following change(s):

1. Change the wording of 13B from Donation to Purchase
2. Add Executive Session for Personnel

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gabrielle Nelson, Council Member
AYES:	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

A. Port Wentworth Patriots- Gymnastic Team

Tiffany Lancaster along with Melissa Devaney and Cheryl Hewitt came and introduced the Port Wentworth Gymnastic Team to the council.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS

A. Kellie Powell

Mrs. Powell discussed the following topics:

- Recreation Plans

- Amendment to Planning Commission Ordinance

B. Georgia Benton

Mrs. Benton discussed the following topics:

- August 25th, 2022 Minutes
- Ditches and Canals

C. Trevor Ferguson

Mr. Ferguson discussed the following topics:

- Town Hall Meeting

D. Avril Roy-Smith

Mrs. Roy-Smith discussed the following topics:

- Notice for Planning and Zoning Meeting
- Minutes
- New Maintenance Crew
- Ditches

7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Council Member Nelson stated that due to the concerns with the minutes she has reached out to the City Clerk of Savannah who is a parliamentarian of great proportions and is very well respected in the county and in the state. He advised that the subject discussed with a notation that either support or opposes a particular subject can be used, and his opinion without going into the details is that while the meeting is open to the public per state law it is the meeting of city council that were duly elected not the meeting of the citizens who are represented by the governing body. Mrs. Nelson stated that we cannot put 4-5 minutes of everyone's comments in the minutes, however, she does agree that they should be cited to some degree. She also stated that we do over elaborate in our minutes, and what is supposed to be in minutes is what is voted on and not what is discussed in totality.

Council Member Barbee asked the City attorney if that was correct by law and he said yes, that the law does not require any transcripts or anything as such.

A. Regular Council Meeting Minutes - August 25, 2022

1.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Thomas Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem
SECONDER:	Rufus Bright, Council Member
AYES:	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

9. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

11. CONSENT AGENDA

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

13. NEW BUSINESS**A. Planning and Zoning Board Reorganization**

Council Member Nelson stated that she agrees with the timeliness of it and she wants to make sure that everyone has full understanding of what's going on. She said that if we went with all of the recommendations they gave then we would have an issue because then the board would be the one making the decisions, without council approval, however, as of now the board is who gives the recommendation. She stated that when she was on the board it was an opportunity for her as a citizen to get involved and figure out what was best for the entire city, and she doesn't 100% disagree with putting employees or maybe ex officio's just to view. She also stated that she would love to see the members who want to stay-stay, and that we need to have committed people as well and if business owners are going to be apart of the board they need to live in Port Wentworth.

Council Member Bright stated that another issue with the board is that because it is voluntary most people don't show up for things such as training, and he stated that they have to want to do it.

Council Member Nelson stated that Carl Vinson does offer training and they will come but there is a fee, and Mayor Norton said that he doesn't see why we shouldn't have them come out, Council Member Nelson then said that in addition to that we should also have in house training. She also stated that she doesn't want to exclude anyone just because of the knowledge that someone may not have.

City Manager Davis explained that it would be an advisory board and that there wouldn't be a shift in power. He also stated that the idea of including department heads/employee will help with the familiarity of any issues when doing planning and zoning. He also explained that the new assistant city manager would be the chair of the board as he will already be overseeing the development services and has a background in planning and zoning.

Council Member Smith asked why not have the employees be apart of an advisory board or be non voting members, this way we get the knowledge that we need.

Council Member Jones stated that the planning board is the frontage for council they help catch things before they come to council. He also explained that the by having the professionals on the board the citizens and the professionals can feed off of each other when making decisions, and it will also help with the amount of people committed the work of the board.

Council Member Barbee stated that we should bring the board up to the 21st century and that there isn't really an issue of power balance because they will just be advising us and not making the final decision.

B. Real Estate Donation

City Manager Steve Davis explained that Richmond Baptist Church's right away is right as the tip of the highway, and that the council wanted to donate land to them, however, due to constitutional issues dealing with the separation of church and state, we cannot physically just donate the property. However, he has spoken with the pastor about the different options that could be taken and they have decided to move forward with purchasing the property outright.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Thomas Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem
SECONDER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
AYES:	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

C. Real Estate Purchase

The City Manager explained that this piece of property is adjacent to the property that is currently owned by the city for the park and the property would give access to highway 30. The City Manager has talked and negotiated with the owners of the property and stated that we needed two month for due diligence (obtaining a nationwide permit from EPD which is a formality) and temporary access to the park so that we can get started, and they have agreed to work with us on every aspect, so we are asking for authorization to purchase the property.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mark Stephens, Council Member
SECONDER:	Thomas Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES:	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Council Member Stephens made a motion to move into Executive Session and it was second by Council Member Bright. Vote was Unanimous.

Council Member Barbee made a motion to reconvene to Regular Council Meeting and it was second by Council Member Smith. Vote was unanimous

Council Member Barbee made a motion to remove the planning and zoning board chair and it was second by Council Member Smith. Vote was unanimous

16. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Council Member Mark Stephens made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Council Member Rufus Bright. Vote was unanimous.

Mayor Gary Norton

The foregoing minutes are true and correct and approved by me on this _____ day of _____, 2022.

ATTEST:

Zahnay Smoak, Clerk of Council