



# CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH

CITY COUNCIL

JUNE 23, 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 Mayor Gary Norton led 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.

Council Member Barbee recommended to approve the agenda with the following change(s):

Add the update from Tiffany Lancaster to Communications & Petitions  
Move New Business item 13C to the consent agenda as 11B  
New Business item 13A was removed by submitter

**RESULT:** APPROVED [5 TO 1]  
**MOVER:** Rufus Bright, Council Member  
**SECONDER:** Mark Stephens, Council Member  
**AYES:** Barbee, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones  
**NAYS:** Smith

**5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

**6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGISTERED SPEAKERS**

A. Kellie Powell, 18 Blackberry Ln

Explained that she was opposed to the proposed apartments that are to be built on Highway 30 and 21, due to traffic and safety reasons (such as the left turning signal that has not been installed). She also stated that she was for the moratorium because the property owners are bearing the brunt of these taxes for Chatham County for these

developments, therefore we need more residential homes instead of multifamily so that we can share that responsibility.

B. Georgia W Benton, 135 Saussy Rd

Mrs. Benton spoke against the apartments that were being built between Bearing Rd and Highway 30. She also wanted to know how the drainage system is going to work as well as the permits that they have. She also wanted to know how could plans for phase 1,2, and 3 be brought up to council by (PIN # 7-0976-02-027 HWY 30 NOBLE VINES PH) for approval, when there is a lawsuit against it.

C. Bobby Douglas & Rickay Graham, 7351 Highway 21

They asked council if they would donate 3 acres of land that is next to their church so that they can add a sanctuary and a parking lot to their church.

D. J.P Robinson, 225 Grant Rd

Mr. Robinson wanted to know when the yard waste was going to be picked up or if there is anyone who is picking up the waste. He also wanted to know if they get in contact with someone to bury the phone lines, because when they came to cut the grass the phone lines were cut.

E. Linda L. Kelley, 7351 Highway 21

Mrs. Kelley explained why Richmond Baptist church needed the land next to them to be donated to the church.

F. Trevor Ferguson, 6 Laurel Ridge Ct

Mr. Ferguson wanted to know if the individuals who speak during public comments could stop stating their address due to safety precautions. He also stated that we've been discussing the traffic light for a while and wanted to know when it was going to be done. He then stated that the ditches still weren't getting cleaned, and asked if the people who are in charge of cleaning them come to the council meetings to give an answer on what is going on. He also stated that he has reached out to the council members by calling their city cell phones, however, he almost never gets a response and wanted to know if there was a time frame that he should be calling so that he could get an answer. He also asked if the new sports complex that is going to be built on Meinhart could have an entrance that will come from Highway 30

G. Lauree Morris, 831 Barnsley Rd

Mrs. Morris wanted to know how will the DDA Resolution be structured to meet the needs of each district, being that the needs for each district is different. She also asked that the council approve the moratorium.

**7. ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS**

**8. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

A. Regular Workshop and Council Meeting Minutes - May 26, 2022

Council Member Bright made a motion to approve the minutes with the following change(s):

To add that Council Member Smith walked out and did not vote on one of the agenda items

1.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Rufus Bright, Council Member
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Thomas Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem
<b>AYES:</b>	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

## 9. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

Leisure Service Director Tiffany Lancaster made the announcement that the City of Port Wentworth will now be utilizing the Rice Creek School's Football field for all the youth practices this upcoming season, and all the games will be at the field downtown.

### A. Discuss Committee Assignment Process

City Manager Steve Davis explained that there were 8 committees and each Council Member can be on 4 of them. The process that is written in the rules states that each council member states the 4 committees that they would like to be on and if there is any duplicates than the individual with the longest consecutive tenure will handle any tie breakers. Only 3 Council Members can be on a Committee, so that there won't be a Quorum. Being that the Mayor is an ex officio for all of the committees, the council discussed changing the number of council members on each committee to only 2. Therefore, Council Member Mark Stephens made a motion to change the number of Council Members on the committees from 3 to 2. It was seconded by Council Member Bright.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Mark Stephens, Council Member
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Rufus Bright, Council Member
<b>AYES:</b>	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

## 10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

## 11. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Antrim Road Roadway Improvements Pay Request No. 5 in the amount of \$58,858.92 to Sandhill ALS Construction, Inc.

## 12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### A. Adoption of FY2023 Budget-2nd Reading

Council Member Jo Smith stated that there is a lack of clarity in the budget when it comes to the reserve fund. She asked were projects were being covered by the reserve fund and why aren't we looking for other ways to fund those projects.

City Manager Steve Davis stated that there are 17 new positions that are being added(not including the positions that were being discussed for the ditches) , there is a 5% raise that is being given to all the employees, the health insurance costs are going up, and there are major projects that were discussed at the retreat that are going to be done, and more. He also explained that typically a city of this size should carry about 25% of it's funds in reserves. The tax payers have also paid money for services that have not been done, and we need to spend that money on those services as well as overall improving the quality of life. He also explained that they are always looking for alternative funds as well. There is also roll over money that is included within in this budget.

Mayor Gary Norton stated being that the budget has gone up we need to see these improvements getting done with this money and the citizens need to be able to see these improvements.

Council Member Smith said that it is easy to say let's spend the money because it is there, so let's make sure that we are looking for alternate ways to fund these projects. She also stated that she wanted to have a workshop so that the budget could have been discussed more. However, she said that she would be willing to approve the budget with the caveat that alternative funds are searched for before touching the reserved funds.

Council Member Rufus Bright asked if by delaying the budget would we be delaying the work that could be done for the citizens, and Mr. Davis said yes.

Council Member Mark Stephens asked if the fiscal week started next week, and if they were to do what Council Member Smith wanted to do it would take longer than the time frame that we have- Mr. Davis said the fiscal year begins July 1 and that the budget can be amended anytime throughout the year.

Council Member Glenn Jones stated that he understood Mrs. Smith's concerns and that just because the money is there it doesn't mean that we have to use it, however, budgeting for the use of that money is important because if we don't budget for it than we cannot use it.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Glenn Jones, Council Member
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Mark Stephens, Council Member
<b>AYES:</b>	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

### 13. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Site Plan Review Application submitted by Katy Parker for PIN # 7-0906-03-019 (302 Rice Hope Plantation Rd) for a General Development Site Plan to allow a Residential Substance Use Recovery Facility in a R-A (Residential Agriculture) Zoning District

This Item was Removed by Submitter

- B. Site Plan Review Application submitted by Claret Communities, LLC., of behalf of Simz Investment Company, LLC., for PIN # 7-0976-02-027 (Highway 30) for a General Development Site Plan to allow a multi-family development (Noble Vines Phase II) in a P-RIP (Planned Residential Institutional) Zoning District

A representative from Thomas & Hutton stated that they submitted a general concept site plan back in April 2021, which was approved by City Council. Since then they have designed phase 1 of the project and that was approved as well. The item that is on the agenda for approval is for phase 2 of the site plan and he presented the layout to council which consisted of 60 town home units instead of 190 apartment units.

Council Member Stephens asked if the property is connected to Berrien Rd, and he answered that yes phase 1 does but not phase 2. Mr. Stephens also asked if they were for sale or just for rent and was told that at this time it is a rental property, but has the possibility of sale in the future.

Council Member Jo Smith asked about a lawsuit that was pending against this Site Plan Pin number and he stated that he was unaware of any lawsuits.

Mayor Norton asked the City Attorney if he knew any thing about the lawsuit and he said that they would discuss it during the executive session.

Mr. Steve Davis said that his concern is that the future expansion of Highway 30 and the architectural structure. The representative responded to the concerns that Mr. Davis had by presenting the layouts.

Mrs. Benton stated that during the first phase Mr. Jones said that they needed to have a community meeting, however, they never had one. She also said that no sign declaring under development have been put up.

Mr. Charles Coovert stated that council must think of the future of Chatham county and the city of Port Wentworth.

Mr. John Holland stated that with this new development the traffic will become worse and that Highway 30 needs to be a four lane or put in a traffic light before this development is completed.

Mrs. Powell asked that this property should be considered for sale only and not for rent so that the property taxes could be shared.

Mrs. Hester explained that there is no road infrastructure involved with any of the developments that are going on or that are supposed to occur in the future. She also said that the residents on Highway 30 are not the only ones being impacted by new multifamily complex being put in.

Council Member Stephens made a motion to table the vote until after executive session, it was second Council Member Jo Smith and the motion passed.

After Executive session Councilman Stephens made a motion to deny and it was second by Councilwoman Nelson, but before the vote occurred Councilman Jones interrupted to get clarity, which resulted in the motion and second being rescinded.

Councilman Jones then made a motion to approve the item with the provision of the 30ft Buffer. The City Manager suggested that they vote by Roll call. After the Vote it ended in a tie therefore the Mayor voted yes and the Motion was approved.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [3 TO 3]</b>
<b>AYES:</b>	Smith, Bright, Jones
<b>NAYS:</b>	Barbee, Nelson, Stephens

C. Repairs to the Wastewater Treatment Plan UV System

This Item was moved to the Consent agenda as item 11B.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Glenn Jones, Council Member
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Mark Stephens, Council Member
<b>AYES:</b>	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

D. Service Delivery Strategy Resolution

City Manager Steve Davis explained that the MPC hosted meetings with Chatham County all the participating cities on service delivery to make sure that we don't have duplication of services. Mr. Davis met with Chairman Ellis about the growth issues of the City, and something that has been included in the resolution is the canal program where the canals are going to be cleared. He recommended that council approves this resolution.

Council Member Smith asked is this something that is done every ten years, and Mr. Davis said that it was done every 5-6 years.

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

E. Downtown Development Authority Resolution

Mr. Davis explained to the council that there was a DDA in place that went dormant, and the City Attorney looked over the language of it to bring forth the new resolution. However, even though it is dormant it is still registered with the secretary of state office, so it is incorporated. It is registered with DCA, and in order to restart it we would have to provide three years of financials and appoint a board with 7 directors. The DDA will allow them to own acquire and improve properties, enter into contracts and IGA's, and promote downtown areas. He said that the council may need to restate the boundaries due to some annexations that may have taken place.

Councilman Barbee said that if the council appointed a board they would have to have that board for about 6 years and the board could do things without council's input, so he would rather hold a workshop where the citizens can let the council know what they can do to revitalize downtown. Mr. Davis said that it is a 4 year time frame and the council could put restrictions on what they could do.

Councilwoman Smith stated that spoke with GMA and GDA to discuss the boundaries of the DDA and traditionally a DDA is designated for just the downtown area and that for funding opportunities it should stay that way, however, having a North side Development Authority would be a good thing to have as well.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>DELAYED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Mark Stephens, Council Member
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Jo Smith, Council Member
<b>AYES:</b>	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

F. Industrial Moratorium

Mr. Davis stated that with the growth of the city this will give us time to address and understand everything that we have before us and all of the concerns that we have. He also informed the council that it doesn't change any current zoning or plans that are in place, and that he supports it.

Councilman Mark Stephens asked if 6 months is the maximum that this moratorium can stand for, and the city attorney Scott Robichaux stated that there is nothing states that we can't go longer, however, when they are looked at by the courts they say that it is not too long.

Councilman Barbee made a motion to approve the 0604 version of the resolution and it was second by Councilman Stephens

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

**14. RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PROCLAMATIONS**

**15. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Councilman Stephens made a motion to adjourn to Executive session and it was second by Councilman Barbee.

Councilman Barbee made a motion to reconvene to Regular Council Meeting and it was second by Councilman Bright.

A. Personnel

Council Member Barbee stated that he would like to make a motion to allow Mr. Davis to hire Mr. Thomas Kilmartin and Mr. Charles Mays for the respective position, and it was second by Councilman Bright.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Thomas Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Rufus Bright, Council Member
<b>AYES:</b>	Barbee, Smith, Nelson, Stephens, Bright, Jones

B. Real Estate

C. Legal

**16. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Council Member Gabrielle Nelson made a motion to adjourn. 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