

MINUTES

City Council Meeting Monday, April 21, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order: Mayor Campbell called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Opening: Councilmember Daniel gave the invocation and a Cadet of Robert W. Groves HS Army JROTC led the City Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

City Council Members: Mayor Bruce Campbell, Mayor Pro-Tem Marcia Daniel, Councilmember Gwyn Hall, Councilmember Richard Lassiter, Councilmember Natalyn Morris, Councilmember Debbie Ruiz and Councilmember Kim Tice.

Staff Members: Rhonda Ferrell-Bowles, City Manager; James P. Gerard, City Attorney; Gil Ballard, Chief of Police; Cliff Ducey, Director of Parks and Recreation; Carlos Nevarez, Interim Assistant Director of Planning and Zoning; Veronica Enoch, Executive Assistant to the City Manager; Tonya Roper, Clerk of Council; and Kyle Thomas; IT Tech.

Formal Public Comment: Ms. Emma Salas; Cadet Captain of Robert W. Groves HS Army JROTC requests to address the City Council about the overview of the program and present an issue of concern as a Garden City resident.

Caden Evans; Cadet Major of Robert W. Groves HS Army JROTC stated he will be talking about JROTC and its mission. Cadet Mjr. Evans provided an overview of what JROTC stands for and the significance of the program. He stated that JROTC stands for Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, it's the smaller version of the college course reserve officers training course and helps to build officers for the military, reserves, Army, Marine Corp and Navy.

Cadet Mjr. Evans stated this is a cadet led program that helps students to better understand their life choice in becoming better as leaders, followers, listeners, and communicators - all of these choices learned as a team can help to make us better citizens overall. Cadet Mjr. Evans talked about the numerous activities completed by JROTC as a team and explained the cadet's accreditation JPA inspection process. The inspection process involves having prepared portfolios, knowing stationery and movement commands while ensuring uniform requirements are met.

Cadet Mjr. Evans finished by thanking Council for the opportunity and saying JROTC has helped him to realize that he wants to commission as a second lieutenant with others wanting to be in the national guard as well as active duty, and JROTC has opened our eyes to all possibilities and helped to shape us to be better citizens.

Genesicia Ayeh; Cadet Major of Robert W. Groves HS Army JROTC stated she will be presenting the issue of concern. Cadet Mjr. Ayeh stated the issue is there are too many drivers speeding through the

community. This issue impacts everyone because it is dangerous for the communities prohibiting people from being able to play in our streets and traveling safely. There is speeding on streets where there are no speed bumps, and stop signs are ignored. We have discovered that these issues are more evident in new and young drivers.

Cadet Mjr. Ayeh suggested providing more speed bumps throughout the community, providing a directive for an alternative route, increasing the police presence, and using news outlets to communicate risks to deter speeders. She continued by saying these suggestions, and providing education can help in making those understand the consequences that arise from the dangers of speeding. Cadet Mjr. Ayeh finished by thanking Council for listening to the issues of concern.

David T. London, Senior Army Instructor for the Robert W. Groves JROTC program addressed Council by stating he was happy that Garden City Council opened their doors for the students to experience a City Council meeting; he said if it weren't for the program, most students would not know what happens in these chambers or all of the great work that you do in representing us and dealing with issues. The purpose of attending was to open the students' eyes to the presence of careers in the government sphere, to help them learn that they too are part of the government, that Council works for the residents and as students – they are residents. Mr. London continued by saying the students will be able to ask a question when they have a concern and will be able to come before the Council to have their voices heard for those concerns.

Mr. London thanked Council for allowing the students to be present and requested Council take a picture with the students.

Councilmember Daniel stated that the Council appreciates the young people being present and understands the students are considering the military as a career but if you want to change careers, please consider being open to becoming a police officer – your local community needs you.

Councilmember Daniel thanked the students for attending the Council meeting as well as saying we as Council would love to hear your suggestions or if would like to talk with us, we extend the invitation to come to Council meetings which are held every other Monday at 6pm.

Informal Public Comment: Bonnie Young, 4120 4th Street stated her concerns regarding not receiving speed bumps on Third Street and Fourth Street. Ms. Young said there are speeders that drive on Third Street as if they are driving on the interstate, there are tractor trailers driving on this street and there are young children in the area with special needs. Ms. Young said there should be certain ton limits coming through our community. Ms. Young provided examples of routes the tractor trailers should take instead of using a residential area.

Ms. Young expressed a concern regarding guidelines for building a home certain distances from the center of the road. She discussed the current ordinance regulations versus the allowed requirements when her home was built in 1997. Ms. Young stated residents have recently built homes and the requirements are different, it is not fair and should be the same for everyone.

With no further comments, Mayor Campbell closed this section of public comment.

Public Hearings:

PC-4-25-1119 – Zoning Map Amendment Request – 3rd Street: Receipt of public comment on a request by Ashok Lakhami to rezone 0 3rd Street from R-2 to C-2A for use as a commercial strip center. *The Planning Commission recommended denial of the request.*

Carlos Nevarez, Planning and Zoning Interim Assistant Director provided an overview of the petition. Mr. Nevarez explained that on April 8th, the application was heard at the Planning Commission meeting to rezone the parcel on 3rd Street from R-2 to C-2A. The property is approximately forty feet wide, the property is located behind existing commercial properties, and the petitioner is asking to rezone the property in order to get buffer clearance from the residential areas. The applicant is looking to rezone in order to develop the front parcel with the buffer requirements.

Mayor Campbell asked if the request meets all of the requirements.

Mr. Nevarez stated the Cities' recommendation was for approval because it meets the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan, the area is commercial, and this is the last parcel to be rezoned based on the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission's recommendation is for denial.

Councilmember Lassiter asked if this parcel is at the corner of 3rd Street and Highway 80?

Mr. Nevarez replied that is correct and there is a lift station owned by the City, but it will not interfere with the buffer.

Councilmember Hall asked if this rezoning affects the entire area of 3rd Street?

Mr. Nevarez confirmed that the request to rezone is for this parcel only. The parcel will be connected to a commercial lot and the parcels are to be recombined. He reconfirmed for Councilmember Lassiter's inquiry of Staff's recommendation of approval with Planning Commission's recommendation of denial.

Ashok Lakhami, petitioner stated that the request is to rezone the parcel and be allowed to build with the frontage to make the land sufficient. The front of the development will face Highway 80. The majority of the property will be used for a buffer. There will be trees, plants and an eight-foot fence.

Bonnie Young stated that she has family property on 3rd Street and is not in favor of any development happening on her family's property.

The council confirmed that the request is across the street from Mrs. Young's property.

With no further comments, Mayor Campbell closed the Public Hearing.

PC-4-25-1121 – Zoning Map Amendment Request – 38 Telfair Place: Receipt of public comment on a request by Joshua Yellin to rezone 38 Telfair Place from C-1 to C-2 for the rental and sale of tools, equipment, and similar items. *The Planning Commission recommended approval of the request.*

Mr. Navarez stated the request requires rezoning due to the type of proposed business which requires a C-2 zoning district as C-1 doesn't allow tools and equipment rental. Everything in the intersection is also already zoned as C-2; behind the parcel is industrial and this meets the City's comp plan as well. Due to the history of the parcel, Staff made no recommendation, and the Planning Commission recommends approval.

Mr. Navarez confirmed with Councilmember Morris that this location was formally a mulch business.

Josh Yellin, representative of the property owner, provided an explanation handout for the staff's recommendation for the summary of the petition. Mr. Yellin stated that the request is to rezone from C-1 to C-2 exclusively for use as a rental equipment dealer; a use not currently permitted in the C-1 zoning. This site is surrounded by C-2 and Industrial, we are trying to find a use that fits the area, and the commercial zoning does permit the use. The front page of the handout shows the previous business in operation for the landscape dealer with outdoor storage materials. The proposed use is to keep the property C-2, which shows the corridor as commercial and in line with future land use.

Mr. Yellin stated the owners are a State of Georgia dealer for the equipment, this will be their eighth location across the State.

Councilmember Tice asked if the entrance will still come off Telfair?

Mr. Yellin stated that the owners are not looking to change egress or ingress due to a drainage ditch that blocks the entrance. The plan is to use the current warehouse onsite as is and if there are changes then we are aware we will need to come back with a general development plan.

With no further comments, Mayor Campbell closed the Public Hearing.

PC-4-25-1123 – Zoning Map Amendment Request – 181 Smith Avenue: Receipt of public comment on a request by Rochelle Ferguson to rezone 181 Smith Avenue from R-1 to C-2 for outdoor activity events. *The Planning Commission recommended approval of the request.*

Mr. Navarez stated the request requires rezoning due to the applicant requesting to do outdoor activities. Everything around the property is commercial along with the nearby commercial strip. This request is for rezoning only but if this moves forward, the owner will have to present a general development plan for requirements based on parking. City Staff and Planning Commission recommendations were for approval.

Rochelle Ferguson stated we have requested the rezoning for the purpose of having outdoor events like a farmers' market but for the creation of a wellness market. This will be an extension of the business that we currently have next door.

Councilmember Tice stated that her biggest concern is parking.

Ms. Ferguson replied the front area will be utilized for parking with the back area of the property being used for the market.

Alania Parks, Port Wentworth, stated she is very excited about the proposed business and eager for a decision. Ms. Parks said she feels this will be something great for the City of Garden City and involve the community. The market is to inspire both wellness and the arts. With weather permitting, we would like to do the market every Saturday.

Regina Harley stated she is speaking in favor of the request because it will be a benefit to the community, assist with providing healthy recipes and home remedies.

With no further comments, Mayor Campbell closed the Public Hearings.

City Council Minutes: Councilmember Tice made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 7th Pre-Agenda Session and City Council meeting minutes and April 14th Council workshop. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Daniel. The motion passes with Councilmember Daniel, Councilmember Hall, Councilmember Morris, Councilmember Ruiz, Councilmember Tice and Mayor Campbell voting in favor of the motion. Councilmember Lassiter abstained from voting.

Items for Consideration

Resolution – Drainage Improvement Proposal Agreement: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution to authorize Garden City to engage in the services of Kimley Horn Engineering for services to survey and design drainage improvements for Telfair Place West, Telfair Road and Telfair Place, and the Farmer's Market culvert; authorizing the City Manager to execute the work orders for such services.

The City Manager stated the resolution is to engage Kimley Horn Engineering to accept services for evaluation of the drainage infrastructure for deficiencies and make recommendations for improvements on these projects listed for Telfair Place West, Telfair Road and Telfair Road, and the Farmer's Market culvert.

Councilmember Ruiz made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Hall seconded the motion. The motion passes with all voting in favor of the motion.

Resolution – Stormwater Master Plan Services Proposal Agreement: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution authorizing Garden City to accept the proposal of Thomas & Hutton Engineers for professional services in connection with updating the City's 2015 stormwater master plan and to authorize the City Manager to enter into an agreement for the performance of such services.

The City Manager stated Thomas & Hutton drafted the City's 2015 Stormwater Master Plan and we are asking for them to update the plan.

Councilmember Lassiter made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Tice seconded the motion. The motion passes with all voting in favor of the motion.

Resolution – New Gym Complex Street Name Change: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution by the Mayor and Council changing the name of Alfred Street Extension running northwest from Highway 80, as extended by approximately 1,271 feet to the 13.27 -acre site of the new gym and recreation complex to the name of “Eagles Way”.

The City Manager stated Alfred Street is currently being improved by CenterPoint and being extended to our new gym location and this request is to rename Alfred Street Extension to Eagles Way in recognition of the City’s Eagle Sport Organization and the Eagle is the recreation department’s mascot.

Councilmember Tice motioned to approve the resolution. Councilmember Lassiter seconded the motion, the motion passes by all voting in favor of the motion.

Resolution – Planning Commission Appointment: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution to appoint Mack Roberts to serve on the City’s consolidated Board of Zoning Appeals/Planning Commission in the position vacated by Jeff Ashley for the remainder of Mr. Ashley’s term which runs from January 18, 2022, until a successor is appointed by City Council at Council’s first regular meeting in January 2026.

The City Manager stated this resolution is to appoint Mack Roberts who is a city employee and a Garden City resident to serve on the Planning Commission serving in Jeff Ashley’s seat for the remainder of the term. The City Manager said the City currently has eight positions for Planning Commission but will only fill seven positions, leaving one vacant which will help with a tie that can be broken. The City request the appointment of Mack Roberts.

Councilmember Morris made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Hall seconded the motion. The motion passes with Councilmember Daniel, Councilmember Hall, Councilmember Lassiter, Councilmember Morris, Councilmember Ruiz and Mayor Campbell voting in favor of the motion. Councilmember Tice voted in opposition and expressed concern with appointing staff as a member of the consolidated Board of Zoning Appeals/Planning Commission.

Resolution – FY25 Budget Amendment (Water Operations II Position): The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution of the Mayor and Council to amend the FY2025 adopted budget staffing level of the water and sewer fund to provide a full-time water operator II position for the wastewater treatment and collections department.

The City Manager stated the resolution is to amend the staffing level of the water and sewer fund in order to provide a full-time water operator II position for the wastewater treatment and collection department and this will bring the total number of employees for the department to five.

Councilmember Lassiter made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Ruiz seconded the motion. The motion passes with all voting in favor of the motion.

Resolution – Georgia Cities Week: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution recognizing Georgia Cities Week, April 21-26, 2025, and encouraging all residents to support the celebration and corresponding activities.

The City Manager stated this resolution is to declare April 21st thru April 26th as Georgia Cities week, it is a GMA program announced by cities throughout Georgia and the JROTC presentation is an activity of the celebration.

Councilmember Morris made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Hall seconded the motion. The motion passes with all voting in favor of the motion.

Councilmember Hall said he would like to address the concerns by Ms. Young and the speaker regarding the speed humps. Councilmember Hall stated that the City has a procedure in place now concerning speed humps. Residents can sign petitions for a specific area and the petition will be evaluated on whether or not speed humps will be placed in the requested area.

Councilmember Hall stated for the comment by Ms. Young regarding homes being built too close to the road, please speak with Carlos in Planning to go over those requirements.

Councilmember Lassiter stated the Council implemented the stop signs in the 3rd Street area to combat the issues of speeding. He said the city has a team in place for requests to be evaluated once it's been brought to our attention.

Adjournment: Mayor Campbell called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Hall motioned to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:42pm. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Lassiter and passes without opposition.

*Transcribed & submitted by: The Clerk of Council
Accepted & approved by: The City Council on 05-05-25*