

Canton, Georgia

*110 Academy Street
Canton, Georgia 30114*



Minutes - Final - Final

Thursday, February 6, 2025

6:00 PM

**City Hall
110 Academy Street**

City Council

1. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was led by Mayor Grant and an invocation was given by Councilmember Waterman.

2. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Grant.

Members Present:

*Mayor Bill Grant
Mayor Pro Tem Shawn Tolan
Councilmember Farris Yawn
Councilmember Sandy McGrew
Councilmember Dwayne Waterman
Councilmember Bryan Roach
Councilmember Travis Johnson
Mr. Billy Peppers, City Manager
Mr. Bobby Dyer, City Attorney
Mr. Nathan Ingram, Assistant City Manager
Mr. Marty Ferrell, Police Chief
Mr. Ken Patton, Housing Initiatives Director
Ms. Amy Thomas, Human Resources Manager
Mr. Steve Green, Zoning Administrator
Ms. Bethany Watson, City Engineer
Ms. Brittany Anderson, City Planner
Mr. Mike Morgan, Information Technology Director
Ms. Annie Fortner, City Clerk*

Absent:

None

3. Consideration to Approve Agenda

Mayor Pro Tem Tolan made a motion to approve the agenda. Councilmember Yawn seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

4. Guests and Visitors

- A.** Recognition of Detective Tom Priest for 25 Years of Service with the Canton Police Department - Police Chief Marty Ferrell

Police Chief Marty Ferrell presented a plaque to Detective Tom Priest in recognition of his 25 years of service with the City of Canton Police Department.

5. Public Hearings

- A. Public Hearing for Cases ANN2409-001, RZON2409-002, and MP2409-003 - Requests to Annex, Rezone, and Gain Master Plan Approval for 57.16 Acres Located on Knox Bridge Highway for a Residential Development - Zoning Administrator Steve Green

Attachments: [ANN2409-001, RZON2409-002, and MP2409-003 Documentation](#)

Zoning Administrator Steve Green introduced the applications noting the proposed development consists of 200 total homes located along both sides of Knox Bridge Highway with varying lot widths. Mayor Grant opened the public hearing and called on the applicant to present their case. Mr. Benson Chambers represented the applicant. Mr. Chambers discussed the history of the subject property and the requested zoning. Mr. Chambers stated the proposed development would have single family detached homes, greenspace, and buffers to the surrounding properties. Mr. Chambers informed that the property has no reasonable economic use as it is currently zoned within Cherokee County. Ms. Inger Eberhart spoke in support of the applications stating she is pleased that the proposed development does not consist of apartments. Ms. Eberhart discussed a couple of requests for conditions including limiting construction hours, minimizing light pollution, and restricting traffic through Franklin Park. Mr. Patrick Chandler spoke in opposition to the applications discussing concerns with the proposed buffer, roadway crossing a stream, and noise that will come from the development. Mr. Tim Kinder spoke in opposition discussing concerns with traffic, safety, water and sewer services, and strain on school and emergency services. Mr. Thomas Weaver spoke in opposition to the applications due to traffic and procedural concerns with annexing two parcels. Ms. Denise Kula spoke in opposition, stating that residents did not receive much information from the community input meeting that was hosted by the applicant. Ms. Kula also discussed concerns about traffic and the price points of the homes. Mr. Frank Utsch spoke in opposition due to the strain on the school system and traffic congestion. Ms. Jessica Feola spoke in opposition to the applications noting issues with an insufficient buffer, noise, stormwater concerns, traffic/infrastructure strain, and the impact on wildlife. Mr. Chambers spoke in rebuttal stating that improvements to Highway 20 (Knox Bridge Highway) would be completed through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Mayor Grant closed the public hearing and opened discussion to Council. Councilmember Roach declared that he has a conflict with this item and will not participate in the discussion. Councilmember Tolan requested that staff get with the applicant to see which questions were not answered during the community input meeting and that those answers be provided to the residents. Mayor Grant asked about the locations of the entrances. Mr. Green stated all three are located along Knox Bridge Highway. Councilmember Waterman asked if staff knew of a potential timeline for the improvements along Highway 20 (Knox Bridge Highway). City Engineer Bethany Watson stated GDOT has estimated that construction on that roadway would begin in 2029 but will start on the Bartow County end of the highway. Mayor Grant asked if a traffic study has been completed. Mr. Green stated a study has not been submitted. Mayor Grant asked if the applicant expressed any other desire in being annexed into the City other than having increased density. Mr. Green stated no.

- B. Public Hearing for Cases CUP2411-004 and ZCA2411-003 - Request for Conditional Use Permit and Zoning Condition Amendment for River Green Pods J1 and J2 for the Construction of 95 Townhomes and 6 Single Family Detached Homes - Zoning Administrator Steve Green

Attachments: [CUP2411-004 and ZCA2411-003 Documentation](#)

Mr. Green introduced the applications and stated the reason for the requests is to change the approved house types. Mayor Grant opened the public hearing and called for the applicant to present their case. Ms. Michelle Horstemeyer represented the applicant. Ms. Horstemeyer discussed the newly proposed layout for this pod of River Green and noted the applicant will work with staff to provide additional parking. Ms. Horstemeyer provided a rendering which showed the originally approved layout for this pod with the newly proposed layout noting there would be much more greenspace. Ms. Horstemeyer stated that there would be a Homeowner's Association for this section with covenants and displayed the proposed architectural renderings of the townhomes. Mr. Bernie Palcisko spoke in opposition to the applications stating that the request does not fit within the original design of the community. Ms. Lori Nichols spoke in opposition discussing that she made investments in the development based on the original plan for the community. Ms. Nichols further discussed concerns with the builder/applicant and stated what is proposed is out of place in the community. Ms. Horstemeyer spoke in rebuttal stating that the homes in this pod would not be visible from River Green Avenue and discussed the proposed price points as well as greenspace. Mayor Grant closed the public hearing and opened discussion to Council. Councilmember Roach asked if the applications were denied, could the applicant rent the single-family homes within that pod or build smaller house sizes. Mr. Green stated he does not know of any restrictions for rental units within River Green and he does not believe there is a minimum house size. Councilmember Waterman discussed concerns he has heard from residents including property values, traffic, and timeline for construction. Mayor Pro Tem Tolan stated that since the developer has not reached the full number of approved units within the overall River Green development, if there is any consideration of selling to another developer to reach the total units approved. Councilmember McGrew asked for the originally approved number of units within this section. Mr. Green stated 110 units.

- C. Public Hearing for Cases ZCA2412-002, MPA2412-001, and CUP2501-001 - Request for Zoning Condition Amendment, Master Plan Amendment, and Conditional Use Permit to Amend the Previously Approved Park Village Master Plan - Zoning Administrator Steve Green

Attachments: [ZCA2412-002, MPA2412-001, and CUP2501-001 Documentation](#)

Mr. Green introduced the applications noting that the Zoning Condition Amendment seeks to modify previously approved conditions for the Park Village development. The Master Plan Amendment request is to add acreage to the development and the Conditional Use Permit seeks to allow for multifamily residential units. Mayor Grant opened the public hearing and called for the applicant to present their case. Mr. Alex Brock represented the applicant. Mr. Brock provided a presentation which discussed the approvals that were given in 2022 and the additional acreage to be included within the development. Mr. Brock provided aerial photographs of the property, renderings of the 2022 approved Master Plan, and the newly proposed Master Plan. Mr. Brock stated the new plan provides a more efficient layout and noted that the density is not being increased with the additional acreage. Mr. Brock discussed key differences in the residential layout as well as the industrial configuration. It is requested to keep the option of a parking deck within the approval. Mayor Grant closed the public hearing and opened discussion to Council. Councilmember McGrew asked about the greenspace shown on the renderings and requested that lighting within the development be at a temperature as to not to interfere with migrating birds.

6. Consideration to Approve Minutes

- A. Council Meeting Draft Minutes - January 16, 2025

Attachments: [Minutes - Council Meeting - January 16, 2025](#)

Councilmember Waterman made a motion to approve the minutes. Councilmember Yawn seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

7. Informational Items

- A. Information Only - Cases MPA2412-004 and CUP2412-003 - Request to Amend Certain Conditions Placed Upon Previously Approve Master Plan Amendment and Conditional Use Permit in Pod I of Riverstone - Zoning Administrator Steve Green

Attachments: [MPA2412-004 and CUP2412-003 Documentation](#)

Mr. Green discussed that conditions were previously placed on this pod restricting the units to be rented to seniors. A new group is looking to develop this property and would like to remove this restriction. In addition, the applicant is seeking the City's Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) allocation as well as a financial commitment letter in the amount of \$500,000 to support the construction of 96 affordable housing units.

8. Other Announcements

Mayor Grant read a proclamation for Black History Month.

Councilmember McGrew noted that a Ward 1 Town Hall will be held on February 27th at 6:00 pm in the City Hall Auditorium.

9. Ten Minute Public Input

Mr. Thomas Weaver discussed possible changes regarding federal grant funds.

10. Consent Agenda

None.

11. Old Business

- A. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Memorandum for the Acceptance of Roadways within Summit at Towne Mill - City Manager Billy Peppers

Attachments: [Summit at Towne Mill](#)

City Manager Billy Peppers stated that the memorandum included within Council's agenda packet was provided to the Homeowner's Association of the Summit at Towne Mill. They agree with this memorandum. Mr. Peppers reviewed the memorandum which outlines the date of acceptance (October 1, 2025), the required work to be completed by the HOA, and the documents necessary to accept the streets. Councilmember Roach made a motion to approve the memorandum for the acceptance of roadways within the Summit at Towne Mill. Mayor Pro Tem Tolan seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

- B. Discussion and Possible Action on the Canton Ambassadors for Public Safety (CAPS) Initiative - Police Chief Marty Ferrell

Attachments: [CAPS Initiative](#)

Chief Ferrell stated that the Canton Police Department is requesting Council's consideration to approve the hiring of four (4) Canton Ambassadors for Public Safety (CAPS). This program was introduced to Council at the retreat last October. Chief Ferrell stated that the CAPS Unit will respond to non-emergency, non-violent calls for service, patrol city parks, direct traffic, patrol downtown and city park special events. Chief Ferrell noted that he believes the Police Department's current budget allocation will cover the funding needed to implement this program for the remainder of the current fiscal year. In the upcoming FY 2026 budget process, a budget request of around \$360,000 will be submitted to fully fund the CAPS Unit. Chief Ferrell further discussed training for the ambassadors as well as starting pay. Councilmember Waterman made a motion to approve the Canton Ambassadors for Public Safety (CAPS) Initiative. Councilmember Johnson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

- C. Discussion and Possible Action on the Canton Police Department Co-Responder Initiative - Police Chief Marty Ferrell

Attachments: [Co-Responder Initiative](#)

Chief Ferrell stated that the Police Department is requesting that Council approve a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Highland Rivers Community Service Board for a Co-Responder Initiative. This program was also introduced at Council's fall retreat. The Co-Responder Unit will consist of a police officer and a licensed counselor that will respond to calls for service with a mental health component. Councilmember McGrew made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Highland Rivers Community Service Board for the Co-Responder Initiative. Councilmember Yawn seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

- D. Discussion of the North Canton Cottage Village Project - Housing Initiatives Director Ken Patton

Attachments: [North Canton Cottage Village](#)

Housing Initiatives Director Ken Patton stated that the civil site plans for this project have been approved and there are several options for the Council to consider to move the project to the next phase. Mr. Patton reviewed the list of options as provided in Council's agenda packet. Following discussion, Mayor Grant requested the timelines, potential funding/costs, and pros and cons for each option be provided to Council to be discussed at the upcoming March retreat.

12. New Business

- A. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve 2025-2026 Health Insurance Renewal for the City of Canton - Human Resources Manager Amy Thomas

Attachments: [2025-2026 Insurance Renewal](#)

Human Resources Manager Amy Thomas stated that Mark III presented the City with a final renewal quote to remain with Anthem for the City's medical insurance. The quote received reflected a 3% overall increase in the City's health insurance which is lower than the budgeted amount and lower than expected market increases. Ms. Thomas informed that Mark III also presented a renewal quote to remain with Anthem for the City's dental insurance. The quote received reflected a 9% increase. The original proposal was a 20% increase. Councilmember Johnson asked if medications can be added to the insurance plans. Ms. Thomas stated no but said she will look at different options. Councilmember Yawn made a motion to approve the 2025-2026 health insurance renewal for the City of Canton. Councilmember Johnson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

- B. Discussion of Action to Renew the Task Order Agreement Contract for Professional Engineering Services to Black & Veatch Corporation - City Engineer Bethany Watson

Attachments: [Black & Veatch Task Order Agreement](#)

Ms. Watson stated this agreement would be a second amendment to the contract that expires in February 2025. Staff has many projects with Black & Veatch and would like to continue with them.

- C. Discussion of the Distribution Relocation/Conversion Project Binding Agreement Between Georgia Power Company and City of Canton in the Amount of \$748,683.17 - City Engineer Bethany Watson

Attachments: [Georgia Power Company Agreement](#)

Ms. Watson discussed that a portion of the West Main Street Pedestrian Corridor project involves converting overhead utilities to underground. This binding agreement is for Georgia Power's conversion of over to underground power. Ms. Watson noted that Council approved a non-binding agreement in the amount of \$895,000 for this project previously. The binding agreement is \$748,683.17 which is around \$150,000 less than originally estimated.

- D. Discussion of Task Order 7 for West Main Street Pedestrian Bridge Concepts from Practical Design Partners, LLC in the Amount of \$76,500 - City Engineer Bethany Watson

Attachments: [Practical Design Partners Task Order 7](#)

Ms. Watson stated that staff requested a proposal from Practical Design Partners (PDP) for conceptual designs of a bridge over the railroad at The Mill on Etowah. The proposal includes developing concepts for four alternatives: 1) A pedestrian bridge over the existing railroad with an ADA compliant ramp and switchbacks (as needed) along the south side of West Main Street; 2) A pedestrian bridge over the existing railroad with an ADA compliant ramp and switchbacks (as needed) along the north side of West Main Street; 3) A pedestrian bridge over the existing railroad with an elevator as access for the approach east of the existing railroad; 4) An at-grade railroad pedestrian crossing. Ms. Watson stated that once an alternative is selected, a 3D rendering will be developed.

- E. Discussion of the Award of Task Order 7 for the Transportation Improvement Project Highway 140 at Reinhardt College Parkway Intersection Improvement Project Design to Michael Baker International in the Amount of \$44,479.14 - City Engineer Bethany Watson

Attachments: [Michael Baker International Task Order 7](#)

Ms. Watson stated this project is funded with 80% being federal funds through ARC. The City is responsible for 20%, which comes from Impact Fees and SPLOST. Ms. Watson stated this Task Order is for the lighting design of the roundabout.

13. City Manager's Report

Mr. Peppers discussed three handouts provided to Council which provided updates on items discussed at the Council's fall retreat, activities/projects completed in 2024, and items expected to occur or be completed in 2025.

14. Council Introduced Items

None.

15. Mayor's Report

- A. Canton Tourism Board Appointment

Mayor Grant noted an appointment needs to be made to the Canton Tourism Board. Councilmember Roach thanked Ms. Sabrina Kaylor for serving on the board and nominated Ms. Dana Cox to serve on the Canton Tourism Board. Councilmember Waterman seconded the nomination and it was approved unanimously.

16. Adjourn to Executive Session to Discuss Real Estate

Councilmember Roach made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss real estate. Councilmember Yawn seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Bill Grant, Mayor

Attest:

Annie Fortner, City Clerk

Dates Minutes Approved by Council