



WORK RETREAT
OF MAYOR AND COUNCIL
CITY OF SNELLVILLE, GEORGIA
SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 2024

Present: Mayor Barbara Bender, Mayor Pro Tem Tod Warner, Council Members Norman A. Carter Jr., Kerry Hetherington, Cristy Lenski, and Gretchen Schulz. Also present Georgia Municipal Association Facilitator Michael McPherson, City Manager Matthew Pepper, City Attorney Chuck Ross with Powell and Edwards Attorneys at Law, Chief Greg Perry, Planning and Development Director Jason Thompson, Code Enforcement Officer Johnny Greene, Parks and Recreation Director Lisa Platt and City Clerk Melisa Arnold.

Call to Order

Facilitator Michael McPherson convened the meeting at 8:00 a.m. and talked about the steps for a successful work retreat.

Planning Retreat Discussion – Goals and Objectives

City Manager Pepper gave an overview of the major accomplishments for the year 2023. Discussion was held on various topics. (Facilitator Michael McPherson's report for Mayor and Council discussions and goals is attached to and made a part of these minutes.)

Mayor Bender read the closed meeting notice into the record as follows:

- To authorize negotiations to purchase, dispose of, or lease property; authorize the ordering of an appraisal related to the acquisition or disposal of real estate; enter into a contract to purchase, dispose of, or lease property subject to approval in a subsequent public vote; or enter into an option to purchase, dispose of, or lease real estate subject to approval in subsequent public vote, which is excluded from the Open Meetings Act pursuant to Section 50-14-3(b)(1)(C).

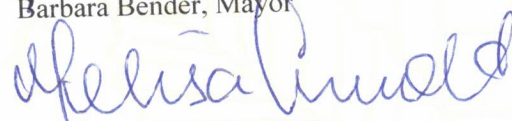
Upon a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Warner, 2nd by Council Member Schulz, the meeting was closed, with all Council Members and the Mayor present and voting in favor.

The meeting was closed at 4:00 p.m.
The meeting reconvened at 4:12 p.m.

Adjournment

Council Member Lenski made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Council Member Carter; voted 6 in favor and 0 opposed, the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.


Barbara Bender, Mayor


Melisa Arnold, City Clerk

City of Snellville Administration Department

**Snellville Planning Retreat
Georgia Municipal Association Offices
Atlanta, Georgia
Saturday, January 20, 2024**

Attendance: Mayor Babara Bender, Mayor Pro Tempore Tod Warner, Councilmember Kerry Hetherington, Councilmember Norman Carter, Jr., Councilmember Gretchen Schulz, Councilmember Cristy Lenski, City Manager Matt Pepper, City Clerk Melissa Arnold, City Attorney Chuck Ross, Director of Planning & Development Jason Thompson, Code Enforcement Officer Johnny Greene, Police Chief Greg Perry, Director of Parks & Recreation Lisa Platt, and GMA Member Services Consultant Michael McPherson.

Mayor Bender called the meeting to order just after 8:00AM, welcoming the participants, then acknowledged Michael McPherson for a best practices presentation. City Manager Matt Pepper presented the list of the City's achievements from 2023.

Council Discussion on Retreat Topics

Code Enforcement

Recurrent violations and their handling were discussed, and the point was stressed for Council's understanding that code enforcement measures demand calls to the police to be processed. Residents that complain expect to "see" resolution for certain types of code violations, hence **Council and staff should understand and be able to describe the process**. For the first call a warning is issued and the call is logged for history. For glaring issues that police notice, police will let code enforcement know to follow-up and assess.

Code enforcement citations take up to two months on average to get through court. Some cases are given 60 days by the court to remedy, but situationally they can take longer. The hardest code enforcement cases to handle are abandoned rental homes and corporately owned properties. Abatement of nuisance or blighted properties is possible, but expensive and require action by the Council.

*Code Enforcement / Quality of Life Unit will provide ideas for ordinance wording changes regarding retail areas for street/lot cleanings and deliveries.

*Council reached a consensus to hire a third Code Enforcement Officer in the FY2025 Budget.

*GMA staff noted that senior citizens may qualify for different types of benefits and aid that may help in restoring their homes to better conditions. The Partnership for Community Action, Inc. serves Gwinnett County under the Georgia Community Action Network and may be a resource for Council and staff for specific situations. See www.pcaction.org

City Redevelopment

The discussion on redevelopment options for the city center focused on quality architectural detail for residential development with greenspace, minimal paved surfaces, and the need for the downtown to incorporate something distinctive to showcase. Any density should contain a variety of types that portray comfort and enable community.

*Mayor Bender requested that the images on the city's website be updated as a refresh for 2024.

Mayor/Council Staff Communication

The discussion centered on the handling of resident complaints that are presented to Council members, then passed on to staff. The focus was on times when Council members do not hear back from staff regarding resolution of the complaints. The city manager said to feel free to elevate communications to text if there is a critical response time, but in the case of an emergency—ALWAYS DIAL 911. **When Council members are in doubt about how to communicate a complaint, speak with the city manager.** A process for handling complaints will be developed by staff for the consideration of the Council.

*GMA staff noted that complaint resolution is something that many cities have a hard time with due to the nature of different infractions. From the momentary noise complaint (that can be persistent or recurring) to the junk car, pile of tires dump site, tethered or off-leash dog, even the run-away elephant (which has happened in more than one city!), **some complaints after resolution do not warrant follow-up communications with Councilmembers, especially those cases that involve accusations of personal misconduct involving a resident.** A good procedure for documenting and prioritizing complaints or tips should be developed and understood by staff and Council.

Briscoe Park Master Plan & Baker's Rock

The Old Library location was discussed first and is being used by the parks & recreation department while the New Community Center is being finish. Staff will make a recommendation about the future use of the old library space once the new community center is put into use. Discussion around the old library space brought the idea of use as a community event space.

The Baker's Rock old homestead area was discussed as a possible site for development for homeless veterans micro housing based on a Savannah partnership. Mayor Pro Tem Tod Warner and Councilmember Cristy Lenski volunteered to spearhead this initiative for factfinding and feasibility.

*GMA staff noted that the Savannah veterans micro housing was a partnership with the Nine-Line Foundation. For more information see: www.ninelinefoundation.org

Towne Green Improvements

Discussion focused on the need for drainage solutions in and around the Towne Green.

***An engineer will be engaged to develop the drainage solution. In the meantime, the tourism and trade employees should be directed to spread offerings out, including use of the space next to city hall for events.** A permanent stage was discussed as a future possibility.

Discussion of future events led to direction for Parks & Recreation to follow-up with event boosters in 2024.

Discussion regarding the longtime management of the Farmer's Market by Councilmember Gretchen Schulz and her husband. Specifically, the need to hand off the administration of the

weekend market. **Councilmember Schulz will create a budget and list of responsibilities in order to help staff find a solution.**

Downtown Development Director

A job description for a downtown development director has been created. The individual will be the city's point of contact for the Grove, Redevelopment, the DDA, and the Farmer's Market, along with other duties as assigned.

*Attorney Chuck Ross requested the names of cities whose DDA director was employed by the city. GMA staff sent a list of cities forwarded by GMA's Director of Georgia Forward and Placemaking, Sadie Krawczyk, to Mr. Ross and noted that many cities operate with such a model.

Public Art

An aspect of the Create Gwinnett Master Plan was for communities to establish such arts commissions. Discussion on the growing need to develop an arts commission pointed to Suwanee and Duluth as examples of cities with commissions in place. **Development of a structure like other cities' will be explored and the idea of the name Create Snellville was proposed.**

Sanitation

It was noted that the FY2024 Budget subsidized sanitation services by more than \$1M. The provider's contract will be re-bid in 2026 and all indications point to even higher costs. **The city manager believes the Council should come up with a plan.** Moving to a franchise for commercial properties is one way to make up for the costs. **The Council agreed that the community should be informed of upcoming expected increases, so an article to bring awareness to the impending increases should begin education efforts.** Staff prepared a sanitation rate comparison list of 15 other cities in the area or of comparable size.

Intersection Hwy 124 and Hwy 78

Traffic at the intersection was discussed with **traffic directing police officers as a solution during traffic hours. Timing of the light at Oak Road and Hwy 124 might be looked at for impact, as well as better signage at Clower St might have an impact as well.**

Deliveries in Commercial Developments

The Council agreed to discuss further a change in policy to allow for later deliveries in commercial developments.

FY2023 Mid-Year Budget Snapshot

The city manager provided an overview of the mid-year budget that showed strong receipts across revenue streams.

Stormwater Fee Increase

Discussion turned to the examination of an increase in the stormwater fee and consideration of a change in drainage requirements for new builds.

GMA staff noted that the Council has been blessed with the ability to collaborate and work together as a team. The Council understands its role in giving direction for the future, while each keeps an eye toward things that can be accomplished in the moment. However, a good working relationship can become too relaxed. The transition from one city manager to another that was groomed for the position deserves applause for utilizing best practices in succession planning. The point was made that a thorough understanding of the communications between Council and staff should be revisited from time to time to maintain the proper chain of command. Mayor Bender noted that problems in years past stemmed from Council interference, both intentional and unintentional, in the affairs of staff.