



WORK RETREAT  
OF MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
CITY OF SNELLVILLE, GEORGIA  
SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 2023

Present: Mayor Barbara Bender, Mayor Pro Tem Tod Warner, Council Members Solange Destang, Dave Emanuel, Cristy Lenski, and Gretchen Schulz. Also present City Manager Butch Sanders, Assistant City Manager Matthew Pepper, City Attorney Chuck Ross with Powell and Edwards Attorneys at Law, Police Chief Greg Perry, Planning and Development Director Jason Thompson, Public Works Director Craig Barton, Parks and Recreation Director Lisa Platt, Code Enforcement Officer Johnny Green, Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Facilitator Michael McPherson, Director of Equity and Inclusion with Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Freddie Broome, and City Clerk Melisa Arnold.

**Call to Order**

Facilitator Michael McPherson convened the meeting at 8:10 a.m. and introduced Mr. Freddie Broome who talked about the Embrace Civility Program now being offered by GMA.

**Planning Retreat Discussion – Goals and Objectives**

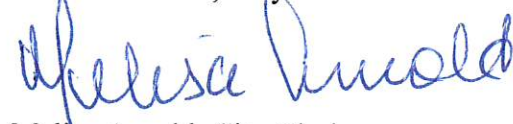
City Manager Sanders gave an overview of the major accomplishments for the year 2022. Department Directors each gave presentations about their Departments accomplishments and upcoming needs.

(Facilitator Michael McPherson's report for Mayor and Council discussions and goals is attached to and made a part of these minutes.)

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

  
Barbara Bender, Mayor

  
Melisa Arnold, City Clerk

# City of Snellville

## Council & Staff Planning Workshop



March 4, 2023



**City of Snellville**  
**Council & Staff Planning Workshop**  
**GMA Offices**  
**201 Pryor Street, Atlanta, 30303**  
**Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**8:00AM to 4:45PM**

**Attendance:** Mayor Barbara Bender, Mayor Pro Tempore Tod Warner, Councilmember Solange Destang, Councilmember Cristy Lenski, Councilmember Gretchen Schulz, Councilmember Dave Emanuel, Planning and Development Director Jason Thompson, Public Works Director Craig Barton, Parks & Recreation Director Lisa Platt, Code Enforcement Officer J. Greene, Police Chief Greg Perry, City Manager Butch Sanders, Assistant City Manager Matt Pepper, City Clerk Melisa Arnold, City Attorney Charles Ross, and GMA Municipal Services Consultant Michael McPherson.

### **GMA Facilitation Activities**

In preparation for the planning workshop, GMA staff held confidential interviews with each of the councilmembers prior to the event. GMA staff worked with the administrative team to help develop the agenda, the workshop presentation, and to coordinate day-of needs at the facility.

### **Welcome/Role of Facilitator**

Michael McPherson welcomed everyone and covered the role of the facilitator, including ground rules for engaging in constructive discussion. As economic development was to be a major part of the day's discussions, emphasis was put on differing perspectives using images of the Emerald City created by several artists whose visual interpretations posed great contrast. Considering the full agenda, McPherson chose to skip ice-breaker activities, but thanked everyone for their time on a Saturday morning, which showed great commitment to the city and its residents. GMA's Director of Equity and Inclusion, Freddie Broome, was called upon for his presentation.

### **EMBRACE/City of Civility:**

Freddie began by talking about the importance of having conversations by using a quote by Margaret Wheatly:

"Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change – personal change, community, and organizational change. We will come alive if we sit together and discuss what is important. We share what we see and feel and listen to what others see and feel."

Freddie set two ground rules for engagement: OUCH and QTIP. Ouch is used to make someone aware they are having an ouch moment based on what was expressed (verbally or nonverbally) or how one has behaved in an insensitive matter. When someone says "OUCH," it allows an individual to have a moment to make others aware of how they are feeling or how someone subconsciously made them feel. QTIP means, Quick Taking It Personal. It is another acronym reminding us we cannot take everything personally. When we take things personally, we lose focus on the issue and control of our emotions.

Freddie also discussed Civility. Civility is more than just politeness. It's about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one's preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. The nine pillars of Civility are:

1. Be considerate of others' opinions. It's okay to agree to disagree.
2. Manage your emotions. Get curious instead of furious.
3. A silent voice is not always a weak voice. Sometimes it's okay not to respond.
4. Be kind! Make your point about the issue, not about the person.
5. Actively listen to learn how to Engage respectfully.
6. Think about the impact of your actions and not the intent.
7. Ask questions to learn, and answer questions with respect.
8. Remember the acronym QTIP (Quit Taking it Personal)
9. Have empathy! Just because you have not experienced it does not mean it does not exist.

Although there was not time to go over the Keys to Success slides in full, McPherson stressed the need to understand civility in terms of perception. When discourse during public meetings takes a wrong turn, it is not only the council that suffers, but it can also hit morale amongst the city's employees. Trust must be built and maintained. Understanding of the roles between elected officials, the city manager, and professional staff is critical. Communication between councilmembers to ensure understanding prior to bringing agenda items for a vote is key.

### **Review of Prior Year Accomplishments**

City Manager, Butch Sanders, briefly reviewed the many impressive Milestones of 2022. See Milestones –2022 document.

### **Department Head Presentations**

Planning and Development Director, Jason Thompson, presented aerial images of the city and pointed out areas of potential for development and redevelopment. Mayor Bender asked that everyone consider the mix of housing and types of development needed for the council discussion later in the day.

Public Works Director, Craig Barton, gave updates across his department. Household sanitation gained 200 customers from 2021 to 2022. The Recycling Center sees heavy use, but certain commodities (mixed paper, paper board) are currently not generating any revenue. **The council should consider charging non-residents for use of recycling center, and the possibility of increasing the yard waste tipping fee. The department needs a new backhoe.**

Street paving costs doubled in 2022. Stormwater maintenance costs more than doubled in 2022 and the stormwater utility fee is not keeping up with the cost. **The city's stormwater management plan will need updating next year.** Staffing vacancies: 3 Maintenance Tech I.

Parks and Recreation Director Lisa Platt updated the group on the past year's effort at marketing and visibility. **Maintenance staffing vacancies could become an issue entering Spring as they are down by 2 base positions and a crew leader.** Also, related to clean-up and maintenance is the failure of assigned community service workers to show up. The Tennis program is doing well and the city should consider investing in more courts. The old library building might be used as an event space for rent. Gwinnett County is slated to add a community center to Lenora Park in FY 25-26. Lisa expressed thanks and excitement regarding the new maintenance facility, which was long overdue. Expansion of senior

programs and the use of reentry services to fill vacancies was also discussed. Staffing vacancies: 3 open positions.

Police Chief Greg Perry reported use of Redspeed revenues covering a great deal of the department's capital needs but cautioned that the source could go away at any time if the General Assembly makes changes to the law. The department won numerous awards in the past year, which the council can take great pride in. Mayor Bender mentioned that she took part in the crisis intervention portion of training that staff received. The Chief requested 2 more patrol officers, a detective, and a communications operator. Staffing vacancies: 4 open positions.

Officer Greene reported there are a few retail properties that are refusing to take care of problems. Citations have been issued and the team is working to resolve.

### **Council Issues Discussion & Goal Setting**

**Christmas decorations** were discussed, and examples were shown. Prices will be explored, and the Community Improvement District will be contacted for partnership along US 78

A lengthy discussion of **economic development and redevelopment** concluded with **the need for some review of the comprehensive plan**. Aerial images were used to get an understanding of areas with potential. A presentation prepared by Smyrna's Director of Economic Development Andrea Worthy was shown as a good example of the types of mixed-use development that has been extremely successful in the recent years. Emphasis was placed on development on several adjoining properties (assemblages) rather than individual, piecemeal development requests.

Sanitation was covered during the public works presentation. **The council will review correspondence announcing changes to curbside recycling service to ensure clarity.**

During Briscoe Park Master Plan discussion, **the council decided to tour several facilities to get a good idea of possibilities for a community center**. The decision was made to **begin plans for construction of 2 more tennis courts**. The idea of a "Bank Shots" area to be added was discussed. **The need for trail connectivity was pointed out as a need due to increased popularity**. Maintenance of the Lenora Church portion of the Baker's Rock property was discussed as an impending issue.

Emergency preparedness related to storms was discussed. **Discussion and planning with the County and all other cities' counterparts should be undertaken, possibly through coordination by the Gwinnett Municipal Association**. The City's COOP should complete its work with Lawrenceville.

Ongoing sidewalk improvements were shown and **plans to continue work on the areas beneficial to the most residents by connecting more walkable areas together will be undertaken**. This would include Rockdale Circle and the Hickory Hills neighborhood.

The council discussed the EMBRACE program's Civility Pledge and will move forward with adoption. The council will explore Organizational Culture education with local minister Quincy Brown and further meetings with Freddie Broome.

Council meeting issues were discussed, and **action will be taken to address defining frequently used acronyms often found on agendas, inspecting/adjusting the speakers and microphones to ensure all**



can hear, and department and committee reports will be put on a rotation to ensure efficacy. Citizen comment was also discussed with the question of allowing visual aids and images to be shown during council meetings. It was **determined that presentation of images should be vetted by council before being allowed to be shown during a council meeting and public comment should be reserved for comment only.** A previous example of an image being shown was brought up and deemed to have been a breach in protocol that should not happen again.

Property tax payment by installments was discussed and determined to be allowable since the full payment is not due until the end of December, giving taxpayers several months to pay. Property tax liens for failure to pay are known as writs of *feri facias* or Fi Fa by the courts—the city recently executed Fi Fa liens for the years 2021 and 2022. **City Clerk Melisa Arnold wanted everyone to be aware that the tax sales are eminent, and the council should be prepared to handle questions.** The council discussed loopholes in the law regarding tax liens and gaming of tax sales.

The council decided to start discussions with the County Planning department before trying to identify specific annexation opportunities.

City manager Sanders took the council through the mid-year budget report. He mentioned the operations plan underway and that the package sales process would be brought forward soon.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm.

## **Resources**

### **Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful / EPD Tire Amnesty Day / Clean Days**

Schelly Marlatt  
Executive Director, Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful  
770.822.5187

EPD STAR Program (Local Government Scrap Tire Abatement)  
<https://epd.georgia.gov/about-us/land-protection-branch/recovered-materials-and-abatement/recovered-materials/star-program>  
Contact: [epd.star@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:epd.star@dnr.ga.gov)

**New Backhoe & Other Equipment—Gov Deals & GMA Direct Lease**  
<https://www.govdeals.com/>

GMA Direct Lease Program  
<https://www.gacities.com/What-We-Do/Service/Purchasing-Financing/Financing/Direct-Lease-Program.aspx>

**Aging Services/ Senior Programs Ideas**  
Georgia Council on Aging  
Nikaela Frederick, Deputy Director  
[Nikaela.frederick@gcoa.ga.gov](mailto:Nikaela.frederick@gcoa.ga.gov)

404.281.0430

[www.gcoa.org](http://www.gcoa.org)

### **Christmas Decorations/Group Purchasing**

Department of Administrative Service Procurement Services

<https://doas.ga.gov/state-purchasing>

Division Contact List

<https://doas.ga.gov/state-purchasing/contact>

Buyboard Cooperative

<https://www.buyboard.com/home.aspx>

Jennifer Lansden, Service Representative Southeast

[Jennifer.lansden@buyboard.com](mailto:Jennifer.lansden@buyboard.com)

512.483.7105

### **Trails and Trail Connectivity**

Trust for Public Land

George Dusenbury, VP Southern Region (and Decatur City Commissioner)

[George.gusenbury@tpl.org](mailto:George.gusenbury@tpl.org)

404.873.7306 x 264

In closing, the members of the Snellville city council work very well together and must continue to build understanding and trust through regular communication. Adopting the Civility Pledge and committing to the Organizational Culture training are great steps to continue building trust. As Snellville is in many ways a mature city, it is good that the council is focused on redeveloping certain areas and new development at the same time. Committing to review the comprehensive plan for guidance is a good start for cultivating redevelopment of the city's core. The city has excellent, motivated, and devoted staff, which is an incredible blessing during a time of great turnover and loss of experience across the country. The challenges that Snellville currently faces are not very different from elsewhere in the state, but the city is better equipped to handle current issues than many of its peers. We hope that the resources provided are helpful. The PowerPoint presentation prepared for the workshop will be provided with this report.

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