

E-NEWSLETTER

NEWS FROM THE CITY OF PELHAM
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MAYOR GARY WATERS THROUGH THE YEARS

Honoring Mayor Gary Waters: 13 Years of Humble Service

He's probably the least likely man one would expect to be in politics. Humble, no-nonsense, and never one to seek the spotlight, Mayor Gary Waters has nonetheless become, in the eyes of many, one of Pelham's finest leaders. As he retires after 13 years as mayor, the community pauses to recognize not only what he has accomplished, but also who he is.

Waters' story is rooted in service. He grew up in Baldwin County near Bay Minette, graduated from Baldwin County High School, and trained as a military firefighter and crash/rescue specialist in the United States Army. After serving as a firefighter in Bay Minette, he moved to Pelham in 1977 to become the City's first paid firefighter. He went on to serve 31 years with the Pelham Fire Department, including 24 years as fire chief, retiring from the department in 2008. In 2012, voters elected him as Pelham's

fifth mayor, and he proudly served three terms.

Those who know him best speak first about his humility and servant's heart. As a young "scrawny kid," Waters often faced bullying. He befriended a bigger classmate, Chuck Tolbert, and the two became inseparable. Years later, when Chuck needed a kidney transplant, Waters didn't hesitate. "I'm going to be your organ donor," he told him. Tests confirmed that Gary—not Chuck's biological relatives—was the best match. Chuck, a man of faith, later said, "Jesus Christ sacrificed himself to save my soul. Gary saved my physical life."

That same spirit of quiet, steady sacrifice has marked Waters' time as mayor. Earlier this year, he received the Alex Dudchock Community Leadership Award from The Shelby County Chamber, recognizing his role in helping transform Pelham into

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THIS MONTH:

Looking Ahead to the Holiday Season

Accolades for Pelham Public Library

A Brighter Drive on Highway 31

Meet PPD's Newest K-9 Team

A Colorful Project in Pelham City Park

Pelham's New Flavors

one of the most professionally managed cities in the state. Chamber President & CEO Kirk Mancer praised Waters for his insistence on ethical, consistent government and for ensuring Pelham is a trusted partner to residents, businesses, developers, and neighboring communities. He also noted that even outside of city hall, Waters can be found mowing lawns for elderly residents, volunteering at the national cemetery, visiting nursing homes, and spending time with citizens in quiet, unheralded ways.

On the day before his final day in office, the former fire chief took one last ride-along with the Pelham Fire Department, bringing his career full circle—from the City's first paid firefighter to its long-serving mayor. "He's a good man. A good soul. What you see is what you get with Gary Waters," said his successor, Mayor Rick Wash. "He leaves a set of shoes that cannot be filled, a void that we'll never span, and to be honest, we won't even try." City Manager Gretchen DiFante added, "When you talk to him, you can actually feel him listening. He's trustworthy and a man of integrity."

When he was first elected, Waters told a reporter, "The emotion I feel right now is pride in our city. It has very little to do with what I did. We just told the truth, and the voters did the rest." That humility has defined his leadership. As he steps into retirement with his wife, Lynn, and their family, one thing is clear: Pelham is better because of Mayor Gary Waters.

**Read the expanded article on Mayor Gary Waters' life of service in the December 2025 issue of the Pelham Pathway magazine.*



New Mayor & City Council Take Oath of Office

A new chapter in Pelham's history began Monday night as the newly elected mayor and city council took the oath of office at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. Rick Wash raised his right hand and was sworn in as Pelham's sixth mayor, becoming the city's first new mayor in thirteen years.

The new Pelham City Council was also seated:

- Michelle Power, Place 1
- Chad Leverett, Place 2
- Christine Townes, Place 3
- Markus Hal Snowden, Place 4
- Michael Harris, Place 5

Following the swearing-in, council members elected Chad Leverett as City Council President and Markus Snowden as President Pro Tempore.

A large crowd gathered to witness the ceremony and celebrate this moment for the city. With this new leadership team in place, Pelham looks ahead to continuing its tradition of progress, community, and pride.