



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
SEPTEMBER 7, 2021, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
AND FIRST BUDGET HEARING
MEETING MINUTES**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Pastor Don Hanna of the First United Methodist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Chandler.

II. ATTENDANCE

Roll was taken by City Clerk Lane Gamiotea to establish a quorum. Members present: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Council Members Noel Chandler, Monica Clark, Bob Jarriel, and Bobby Keefe.

III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

- A. Mayor Watford asked whether there were any agenda items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn. New Business Item G was amended to Item H; Item G, Exhibit 14 was added.
- B. Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Chandler to approve the agenda as amended. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. There were no agenda item forms or comment cards submitted for public participation.

IV. PRESENTATION AND PROCLAMATIONS

- A. Mayor Watford proclaimed the month of September 2021 as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and read the document into the record as follows: "Whereas, September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, which directs the community's attention to this public health epidemic destroying lives, whole families, and sometimes entire communities; and Whereas, suicide rates on the Treasure Coast and in Okeechobee were increasing in the first half of 2021 according to our Medical Examiner's Office; and Whereas, there were nearly two and a half times as many suicides (47,511) in the United States as there were homicides (19,141); and Whereas, for every completed suicide in 2019, there were 29.05 attempts at suicide; and Whereas, the second leading cause of death for ages 10 to 34 and the fourth leading cause for ages 35 to 54, suicide is a major contributor to premature mortality; and Whereas, in 2019, the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population of Suicide Deaths (All) in Okeechobee County was 21.9 compared to Florida at 14.5; and Whereas, suicide is the only type of death that is 100 percent preventable; and by offering the public education, data, support, and services we as a community have taken a step toward preventing another suicide by our residents; and Whereas, we are honored to be part of the healing process, raising awareness for and support of those affected by suicide by offering supporting services addressing mental health illnesses and drug and alcohol addiction. Now, Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, Florida, do hereby proclaim the month of September 2021 as 'Suicide Prevention Awareness Month'."

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Clark to approve Consent Agenda Items **A** [July 20, 2021, July 27, 2021, August 3, 2021, August 11, 2021, and August 17, 2021 meeting minutes]; **B** [July 2021 Warrant Register in the amounts of, General Fund: \$625,007.88; Public Facilities Improvement Fund: \$11,943.88; and Capital Improvement Projects Fund \$72,659.79];

V. CONSENT AGENDA CONTINUED

CONTINUED: **C** [re-appoint Cody Daigneault to the Police Officers' Pension Board of Trustees, and Herb Smith to the Firefighters' Pension Board of Trustees, terms being October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2025 as provided in Exhibit 1]; **D** [one-year renewal through July 31, 2022, Memorandum of Understanding for the administration of traffic control preemption with Okeechobee County as provided in Exhibit 2]; **E** [MTS Software Solutions quote for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21 budgeted item Phase 3 of the backlogged document scanning project for Records Retention-Commercial Building Plans and Permits not to exceed \$20,000.00 as provided in Exhibit 3]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR ORDINANCE ADOPTION AT 6:06 P.M.

- A.** Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Clark to read proposed Ordinance No. 1230 by title only, regarding Comprehensive Plan Small Scale Future Land Use (FLU) Map Amendment Application No. 21-004-SSA [as provided in Exhibit 4]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Mayor Watford read proposed Ordinance No. 1230 by title only as follows: "AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ORDINANCE NO. 635 AS AMENDED, BY REVISING THE FLU MAP ON A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN FROM SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (SFR) TO INDUSTRIAL (IND) (APPLICATION NO. 21-004-SSA); PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION OF ORDINANCE AND REVISED FLU MAP IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Keefe to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1230. City Planning Consultant Mr. Ben Smith of LaRue Planning and Management Services presented the Planning Staff findings together with the Planning Board's review on July 15, 2021, and found the requested IND FLU designation for the subject property to be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, reasonably compatible with adjacent uses, and consistent with the urbanizing pattern of the area. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment. Mr. Steve Dobbs, 209 Northeast 2nd Street, Okeechobee, was present on behalf of the applicant and available for questions. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- B.** Motion by Council Member Chandler, seconded by Council Member Clark to read proposed Ordinance No. 1236 by title only, amending Code Section 2-172 and Chapter 34 related to Fire Services Interlocal Agreement with Okeechobee County [as provided in Exhibit 5]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Mayor Watford read proposed Ordinance No. 1236 by title only as follows: "AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; REVISING SECTION 2-172 AND CHAPTER 34 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES TO REFLECT CHANGES AS A RESULT OF THE CITY ENTERING INTO AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH OKEECHOBEE COUNTY TO PROVIDE FIRE SERVICES WITHIN THE CITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1236. A motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Chandler was made to amend the second 'Whereas' clause of proposed Ordinance No. 1236 as follows: Whereas, as of August 2, 2021, the City no longer has a fire department, ~~no longer provides fire services within the City,~~ and fire services are provided by Okeechobee County through an Interlocal Agreement. **Motion to Amend Carried Unanimously. Vote on Motion as Amended Carried Unanimously.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR ORDINANCE ADOPTION AT 6:16 P.M.

VII. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:16 P.M.

- A. Mayor Watford announced that the purpose of this public hearing was to consider the first reading of ordinances for the proposed millage rate levy and proposed budget for FY 2021-2022.
- B. Mayor Watford announced that the proposed millage rate levy represents 3.68 percent more than the roll-back rate computed pursuant to Florida Statutes 200.065(1).
- C. Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1237 by title only, levying a millage rate of 7.6018 on all real and tangible personal property for proposed FY October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022 [as provided in Exhibit 6]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1237 by title only as follows: "AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; LEVYING THE AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAX MILLAGE RATE FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES ON ALL TAXABLE PROPERTY WITHIN THE CITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF STATE LAW FOR THE FY BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2021 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2022; PROVIDING THAT 7.6018 PER THOUSAND DOLLAR VALUATION SHALL NOT BE LEVIED ON HOMESTEAD PROPERTY; THAT 7.6018 VALUATION SHALL BE USED FOR GENERAL CITY PURPOSES; THAT SAID MILLAGE RATE IS 3.68 PERCENT (3.68%) MORE THAN THE ROLL-BACK RATE OF 7.3317 COMPUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLORIDA STATUTES 200.065(1); PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Keefe to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1237 and set the Final Public Hearing for 6:00 P.M., September 27, 2021.

Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments. Mr. Frank Irby noted for clarification the millage rate is not increasing; the roll-back rate would provide the same amount of ad valorem revenue as last year. The increase in property assessment value at the same millage rate is why there is an increase in the roll-back rate percentage. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- D. Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Keefe to read proposed Ordinance No. 1238 by title only, setting the annual budget for proposed FY October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022 [as provided in Exhibit 7]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1238 by title only as follows: "AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING AN ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; FOR THE FY BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2021, AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2022; APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR OPERATING EXPENSES OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE FOR THE GENERAL OPERATION OF THE SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE CITY AND OTHER FIXED OBLIGATIONS OF THE CITY FOR AND DURING THE FISCAL YEAR; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT AND SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Motion by Council Member Chandler, seconded by Council Member Clark to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1238 and set the Final Public Hearing date for 6:00 P.M., September 27, 2021.

GENERAL FUND	
Revenues	\$10,571,181.00
Transfer-In from Public Facilities Improvement Fund	\$ 350,000.00
Transfer-In from Capital Improvement Projects Fund	\$ 873,534.00
TOTAL REVENUES AND TRANSFERS-IN	\$11,794,715.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 7,452,214.00
GENERAL FUND BALANCE	\$ 4,342,501.00

VII.

FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED	
D. CONTINUED: PUBLIC FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT FUND	
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 3,082,671.00
Expenditures	\$ 1,978,201.00
Transfer-Out to General Fund	\$ 350,000.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES AND TRANSFERS-OUT	\$ 2,328,201.00
PUBLIC FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT FUND BALANCE	\$ 754,470.00
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FUND	
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 3,856,061.00
Expenditures	\$ 318,800.00
Transfer-Out to General Fund	\$ 873,534.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES AND TRANSFERS-OUT	\$ 1,192,334.00
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FUND BALANCE	\$ 2,663,727.00
OTHER GRANTS FUND	
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 560,000.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 430,000.00
OTHER GRANTS FUND BALANCE	\$ 130,000.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT SPECIAL FUND	
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 16,600.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 11,500.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT SPECIAL FUND BALANCE	\$ 5,100.00

Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there were none. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:23 P.M.

- VIII.
- NEW BUSINESS
- A.
- Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1239 by title only, amending the General Employees' Pension Plan [as provided in Exhibit 8].**Motion Carried. Unanimously.**
- City Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1239 by title only as follows: "AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE FURTHER AMENDING THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE GENERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM, RESTATED PURSUANT TO ORDINANCE 1141; AMENDING SECTION 6, BENEFIT AMOUNTS AND ELIGIBILITY; AMENDING SECTION 10, OPTIONAL FORMS OF BENEFITS; AMENDING SECTION 15, MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFITS; AMENDING SECTION 25, REEMPLOYMENT AFTER RETIREMENT; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."
- Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1239 and set September 2, 2021, as the Final Public Hearing date. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- B.
- Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2021-07 regarding the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual [as provided in Exhibit 9].
- City Attorney Fumero read proposed Resolution No. 2021-07 by title only as follows: "A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; ON THE RE-EVALUATION OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE OPERATIONS BY THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PURSUANT TO THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE LAKE OKEECHOBEE SYSTEM OPERATING MANUAL; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."
- It was noted for the record that the word "agriculture" would be added to the first 'Whereas' clause between the words businesses and public. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VIII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- C.** Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Clark to approve Okeechobee Main Street's request to place personalized hometown Veterans' banners in the downtown area during the month of November to celebrate our local Veterans [as provided in Exhibit 10]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- D.** Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to accept the four selected firms for the Request For Qualification No. ADM 01-32-07-21 as pre-qualified to utilize when needed [as provided in Exhibit 11]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- E.** Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to authorize the City Administrator to approve temporary part-time positions when appropriate; i.e. full-time personnel absent for an extended period of time; workload requiring additional resources [as provided in Exhibit 12]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- F.** Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Clark to appoint Gary Ritter as the City Administrator effective September 21, 2021, completing the three-month probationary period. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- G.** ITEM ADDED TO AGENDA: Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Keefe to approve the recommendation from the Flagler Park Design Review Advisory Committee for the Cattlemen's Square Park [as presented in Exhibit 14]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

An offer was presented by Mr. Frank Irby, as Chair and on behalf of the Frank Altobello Trust, to contribute a monetary donation of up to \$100,000.00 to match future funds expended by the City for this project. **The consensus of the Council was to accept the monetary donation.**

- H.** Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Chandler to promote Assistant Police Chief Donald Hagan to Chief of Police effective September 1, 2021 [as provided in Exhibit 13]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Clerk Lane Gamiotea administered the Oath of Office as follows: "I, Donald C. Hagan, do solemnly swear that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the state; and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of the Office of the Chief of Police for the City of Okeechobee, Florida on which I am about to enter, So help me God." And thereafter shall devote personal attention to the duties of the office, and continue in office until a successor is appointed by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Okeechobee, Florida. He was pinned with his Chief Badge by his wife and children.

IX. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

Attorney Fumero introduced the firm's new Attorney, Gloria Velasquez, who has extensive knowledge with planning and development.

X. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Administrator Ritter provided a brief update on the progress being made with the sale of lots within the City Commerce Center.

XI. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler expressed his appreciation for Staff and the FPDRAC for working diligently to finalize a plan for Cattlemen's Square. **Council Member Jarriel** recognized the incoming leadership and spoke briefly on the possibility of lowering the millage rate for next FY. **Council Members Keefe and Clark** echoed all comments. **Mayor Watford** informed everyone of the upcoming lunch being held for all first responders on Saturday, September 11, 2021 from 12:00 to 4:00 P.M. at the VFW Post 10539; all are invited.

XII. ADJOURN: Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:39 P.M.

Submitted By:



Lane Gamiotea, CMC, City Clerk

Please take notice and be advised that when a person decides to appeal any decision made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, s/he may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. City Clerk media are for the sole purpose of backup for official records of the Clerk.