



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA**  
**SEPTEMBER 27, 2021, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**AND FINAL BUDGET HEARING**  
**OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on September 27, 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 Jim Dawson of the First United Methodist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Clark.

**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- A.** Mayor Watford asked whether there were any agenda items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn. New Business Item E was withdrawn.
- 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 week of September 17 through 23, 2021, as Constitution Week and read the document into the record as follows: "Whereas, September 17, 2021, marks the Two Hundred Thirty-Fourth anniversary of the drafting of the Constitution of the United States of America by the Constitutional Convention; and Whereas, the President and the Congress of the United States have designated September 17 as Constitution Day and Citizenship Day and the week of September 17 through 23 as Constitution Week; and Whereas, it is important that all citizens fully understand the provisions principles, and meaning of the Constitution so they can support, preserve, and defend it; and Whereas, the people of the City of Okeechobee do enjoy the blessings of liberty, the guarantees of the Bill of Rights, equal protection of the law under the Constitution and the freedoms derived from it; and 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 week of September 17 through 23, 2021, as 'Constitution Week'."
- B.** Mayor Watford proclaimed the month of October 2021 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. A proclamation was presented to Mr. Jonathan Bean, Executive Director of Martha's House, and read into the record as follows: "Whereas, one in every four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime; and Whereas, victims should have help to find the compassion, comfort and healing they need, and domestic abusers should be punished to the full extent of the law; and Whereas, fleeing domestic violence has caused women and children to be the fastest growing homeless population; and Whereas, powerful partnerships exist locally between the City of Okeechobee and Martha's House Domestic Violence Services; and Whereas, the President of the United States and Congress as well as other federal agencies have expressed a commitment to eliminating domestic violence both nationally and internationally. Now Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, hereby do proclaim October 2021 as 'Domestic Violence Awareness Month' in the City of Okeechobee in recognition of the important work done by domestic violence programs and victims' service providers, and urge all citizens to actively participate in the scheduled activities and programs sponsored by Martha's House of Okeechobee and other community organizations to work toward the elimination of personal and institutional violence against women and girls."



IV. PRESENTATION AND PROCLAMATIONS CONTINUED

- C. A Certificate of Appreciation was presented by Mayor Watford to Mr. Felix Granados which read: “The City of Okeechobee, Florida recognizes the Valuable Contribution of community involvement and Hereby extends this expression of Grateful appreciation to Felix Granados for Faithful Service as a Dedicated Member appointed to the City of Okeechobee Planning Board, Board of Adjustment, and Design Review Board from March 6, 2019, through August 31, 2021.”

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Clark to approve Consent Agenda Items **A** [September 7, 2021 meeting minutes]; **B** [August 2021 Warrant Register in the amounts of General Fund: \$618,434.32; Public Facilities Improvement Fund: \$207,399.51; Capital Improvement Projects Fund \$71,048.48]; and **C** [renew Property and Casualty Insurance coverages with Public Risk Management effective October 1, 2021 as provided in Exhibit 1]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:12 P.M.

- A. Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Clark to read proposed Ordinance No. 1234 by title only, regarding Comprehensive Plan Small Scale Future Land Use (FLU) Map Amendment Application No. 21-005-SSA [as provided in Exhibit 2]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1234 by title only as follows: “An ordinance of the City of Okeechobee, Florida; amending City of Okeechobee Comprehensive Plan, Ordinance No. 635 as amended, by revising the FLU map on a certain tract of land more particularly described here from Single Family Residential to Commercial (Application No. 21-005-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 Keefe, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1234. 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 August 19, 2021, and found the requested Commercial FLU designation for approximately 0.405 acres located in the 100 block of Northeast 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Legal Description: Lots 19 and 20, of Block 2, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Public Records of Okeechobee County, Florida, 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; there was none. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- B. Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1239 by title only, amending the General Employees’ Pension Plan [as provided in Exhibit 3]. **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 for an effective date.”

Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1239. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there was none. Clerk Gamiotea noted for the record the proposed Ordinance with the Actuary Letter and Notice of No Fiscal Impact was sent to the State Retirement Agency on September 8, 2021. The State acknowledged receipt via email, and no other correspondence has been received to date. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**



**VI. MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:18 P.M.**

**VII. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE TRANSMITTAL PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:19 P.M.**

- A.** Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1235 by title only regarding Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment No. 21-002-CPA [as provided in Exhibit 4]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1235 by title only as follows: "An ordinance of the City of Okeechobee, Florida; amending the City's Comprehensive; adding a Property Rights Element including a Goal, Objective and Policies, including Statements of Property Rights as provided in Florida Statutes 163.3177(6), as required by recently adopted Florida House Bill 59; providing for Findings of Fact; 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. 1235 and transmit to the State Land Planning Agency. Planner Smith presented the Staff Report and the Planning Board's unanimous recommendation to approve on August 19, 2021. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there was none. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE TRANSMITTAL PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:22 P.M.**

**VIII. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE FINAL BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:23 P.M.**

- A.** Mayor Watford announced that the purpose of this public hearing was to consider the final adoption of ordinances for the proposed millage rate levy and proposed budget for Fiscal Year (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 Keefe, seconded by Council Member Clark 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 5]. **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 adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1237. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there was none. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- D.** Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Clark 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 6]. **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 FY; providing for conflict; providing for severability; and providing for an effective date."



# **VIII. FINAL BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED**

- D.** Continued: Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1238 [**General Fund**, Total Revenues and Transfers-In projected at \$11,794,715.00; Total Expenditures estimated to be \$7,452,214.00; leaving a Fund Balance of \$4,342,501.00. **Public Facilities Improvement Fund**, Total Revenues projected at \$3,082,671.00; Total Expenditures and Transfers-Out estimated to be \$2,328,201.00; leaving a Fund Balance of \$754,470.00. **Capital Improvement Projects Fund**, Total Revenues projected at \$3,856,061.00; Total Expenditures and Transfers-Out estimated to be \$1,192,334.00; leaving a Fund Balance of \$2,663,727.00. **Other Grants Fund**, Total Revenues projected at \$560,000.00; Total Expenditures estimated to be \$430,000.00; leaving a Fund Balance of \$130,000.00. **Law Enforcement Special Fund**, Total Revenues projected at \$16,600.00; Total Expenditures estimated to be \$11,500.00; leaving a Fund Balance of \$5,100.00.] Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there was none. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

# **MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE FINAL BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:29 P.M.**

# **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- A.** Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Chandler to approve the purchase of a new Energreen ILF Aspen arm tractor in the amount of \$205,000.04 [as provided in Exhibit 7, this FY 2020-21 purchase will be addressed in the final budget adjustments]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- B.** Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Keefe to piggyback the City of Oakland Park's Grant Services contract with RMPK Funding [in the amount of \$3,000.00] for a Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) Grant in the amount of \$131,000.00 for Flagler Parks [as provided in Exhibit 8]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C.** Motion by Council Member Clark, seconded by Council Member Keefe to piggyback the City of Oakland Park's Grant Services contract with RMPK Funding [in the amount of \$3,000.00] for a FRDAP Grant in the amount of \$50,000.00 for Centennial Park [as provided in Exhibit 9]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- D.** Mayor Watford and Council Member Jarriel explained they had received complaints regarding speeding issues from residents on Southwest 14<sup>th</sup> Court. Police Chief Hagan provided a traffic report from the speed trailer that was placed in the 400 block of Southwest 14<sup>th</sup> Court facing eastbound traffic from May 17 through June 8, 2021. The findings included a total vehicle count of 2,125; 99.11 percent (or 2,106) of the vehicles drove under the posted speed limit, 25 miles per hour (mph). Only 0.89 percent (or 19 vehicles) reported to drive over the speed limit. The average speed was 28.32 mph. A copy of the report has been incorporated in the minute packet.

Mrs. Chelsey Parks, who resides at 410 Southwest 14<sup>th</sup> Court, addressed the Council by providing a synopsis of the events that have taken place to date. She requested a speed bump be installed on the street to deter the speeders, as she fears for the safety of her children. She stated that a petition has been signed by six of the 11 residents of the street; two have opposed, and three were not contacted. However, an official petition was not submitted for the record. Mrs. Melissa King addressed the Council stating she has resided at 403 Southwest 14<sup>th</sup> Court, for over 20 years and has three full-time drivers in her household. She is opposed to the installation of a speed bump as it is her opinion it would be more of a magnet for the children to play on, rather than a speed deterrent. Following discussion, **the consensus was, based on the traffic report data a speed bump is not warranted at this time. The problem has been identified by the Police Department to take appropriate measures. Additionally, the residents were encouraged to provide tag numbers of speeding vehicles to the Police Department.**



**IX. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED**

- E.** Motion to amend Chapter Two of the City of Okeechobee Personnel Policies and Procedures-Employment Qualifications, Item 3 [as provided in Exhibit 10] was withdrawn from the Agenda.
- F.** Mayor Watford provided a brief overview of the meeting outcome by the Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) Workgroup. The issue regarding a stipend for OUA Board Members is no longer a topic for discussion. The issue to change the language requiring a super majority to a simple majority vote appears to be a valid amendment for all parties. The third issue of having an elected official from both the City and County is pending the issuance of a legal opinion. The final issue will be addressed at their next meeting, which is the Glades County residency requirement for the fifth member of the OUA Board. Another update will be provided following the next meeting of the Workgroup. No official action was requested on this item.

**X. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE**

Attorney Fumero updated the Council on personnel changes within his firm and introduced Attorney Greg Hyden who has been assigned to Code Enforcement. Updates were provided on the sale of lots in the Commerce Center to OUA, the status of the purchase of the Primitive Baptist Church tax deed, and the Citizens Charter Review Advisory Committee (CCRAC) progress. A final Charter draft was distributed to the CCRAC Members via email to review and submit comments to Administrator Ritter by October 6, 2021. Those comments will be incorporated and presented to the Council at the second meeting in October. A joint workshop and special meeting between the Council and CCRAC is scheduled for November 4, 2021, at 6:00 P.M.

**XI. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

Administrator Ritter advised the contract for OUA to purchase lots in the Commerce Center will be presented at the next meeting. He has requested one of the City appointed OUA Board Members attend future Council meetings regularly to provide updates. He has requested the same of Chief Franklin from Okeechobee County Fire and Rescue. The bid package for Cattlemen's Square is progressing and will be presented soon.

**XII. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

**Council Member Chandler** complimented Public Works staff on grading and making improvements within the alleyways behind the buildings along South Park Street; although recent excessive rain has caused issues to older buildings in this area, the property owners will need to address moving standing water away from their buildings. **Council Members Jarriel** and **Keefe** thanked the citizens present for attending the meeting and reminded everyone of the groundbreaking for Cattlemen's Square and First Baptist Church tomorrow. **Council Member Clark** requested an update on the sale of the Fire Department assets, Fire Chief Smith will provide a list for approval at the second meeting in October. **Mayor Watford and the City Council** expressed their gratitude to Deputy City Clerk Jenkins for her service to the City, this was her last meeting.

**XIII. ADJOURN:** Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:33 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.