



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA**  
**JANUARY 17, 2023, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on January 17, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast (SE) 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Pastor Chad Keathley, Okeechobee Church of God; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Mayor Clark.

**II. ATTENDANCE**

Roll was taken by City Clerk Lane Gamiotea to establish a quorum. Members present: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Vice Mayor Monica M. Clark, Council Members Noel A. Chandler, Robert "Bob" J. Jarriel, and David R. McAuley.

**III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- A. There were no requests for items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.
- B. Motion and second by Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member Jarriel to approve the agenda as presented.  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. One comment card was submitted by Mrs. Raia Black providing information about the Woodland Park Neighborhood Watch Group, of which Council Member Jarriel and City Administrator Ritter attend as residents in that area. The group has resumed meeting every other month at the Okeechobee Freshmen Campus under the leadership of Mrs. Phyllis Koff with support from Lieutenant Reyna of the Okeechobee City Police Department. Mrs. Black expressed her appreciation for the support from the Police Department, encouraged others to begin a Neighborhood Watch Group for their area, and extended an invitation to coordinate their meetings with the Woodland Park Group.

**IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS**

- A. Mr. Dowling R. Watford, Jr. was recognized by City Clerk Gamiotea for his years of service. He was presented with a monetary award of \$1,250.00 and a framed certificate, which was read into the record: **"In recognition of completing 40 years of dedicated service for the City of Okeechobee, Florida as an elected official January 1, 1981 through December 31, 1984 and January 6, 1987 through January 6, 2023. I can assure you, public service is a stimulating, proud, and lively enterprise. It is not just a way of life; it is a way to live fully-Lee H. Hamilton."**

Vice Mayor [City of Port St. Lucie] Jolien Caraballo, and President of the Florida League of Cities (FLC) presented Mr. Watford with the John Land Years of Service Award in the form of a FLC Resolution and a lapel pin. Ms. Patricia Christensen, Executive Director of the Treasure Coast Regional League of Cities, was also in attendance to honor Mr. Watford. The framed certificate reads as follows: **"A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the FLC, Inc., honoring Dowling R. Watford, Jr. for forty years of elected service, and presenting him with the John Land Years of Service Award in recognition of his unselfish commitment to municipal leadership and governance. Whereas, America's municipal governments have long relied upon the unselfish leadership of their citizens for local self-government, and Florida's municipal governments share the time-honored role as the level of governments closest to the people; and Whereas, this reliance places extraordinary responsibilities upon citizen legislators-municipal elected officials-who make significant sacrifices of their time and energies on behalf of their citizenry, often for little to no compensation, making this commitment a true labor of love; and Whereas, municipal leaders strive for excellence in the governance of their city, town, or village, and commit themselves to providing quality services, governing effectively and working to improve the quality of life; and Whereas, the League has named its Years of Service recognition in honor of John Land, the Mayor of Apopka between the years of 1949 and 2014; a leader whose dedication is unsurpassed at the national and state levels, and who modeled the way for decades of municipal leaders; and Whereas, several terms in office are a high compliment voters give to an official, and with these years of experience comes a strengthening of wisdom, discernment and strong leadership skills that bring tremendous value to the municipal governments of Florida; and Whereas, Dowling R. Watford, Jr. has held office in the City of Okeechobee for forty years and is recognized for his achievement. Now, Therefore, be it resolved by the Board of Directors of the FLC, Inc.: That Dowling R. Watford, Jr. is commended for his dedication to the City of Okeechobee and is hereby recognized as an outstanding public servant in Florida."**



**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion and second by Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member McAuley to:

- A. Dispense with the reading and approve the Minutes from December 20, 2022, and January 3, 2023 [as presented];
- B. Approve the December 2022 Warrant Register [in the amounts: General Fund, \$494,531.87; Public Facility Fund, \$9,769,34; Capital Projects Fund, \$91,808.00; Industrial Development Fund, \$4,131.00; and Appropriations Grant Fund, \$675.00; as presented]; and
- C. Temporarily close a portion of Southwest 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues between North and South Park Streets from 5:00 P.M. on February 3 to 4:00 P.M. on February 5, 2023, for the Top of the Lake Art Festival as submitted by Okeechobee Main Street [as presented in **Exhibit 1**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Ms. Tammy Cook-Weedon, Director of Landscape Architecture with Calvin, Giordano, and Associates (CGA) provided an update, via Zoom, on the progress of the Flagler Park Master Plan utilizing a 21-slide power point [as presented in **Exhibit 2**]. All designs and improvements are being proposed with the set budgetary constraints of \$300,000.00 per park. The conceptual designs are complete for Butterfly Square, Block F, Park No. 6, (CGA Project Park No. 7), Settler's Square, Block A, Park No. 4 (CGA Project Park No. 5), and Veteran's Memorial Square, Block E, Park No. 1 (CGA Project Park No. 2). Cattlemen's Square, Block L, Park No. 5 (CGA Project Park No. 6) design and construction is complete.

Today's review focused on the proposed design for Seminole Square, Block G, Park No. 3 (CGA Project Park No. 4). The goal is to work directly with the Seminole Tribe of Florida to ensure historical accuracy of all design elements. A redesign of the Square will give the existing chickees a purpose as an integral part of the space. New elements include sculptures at the base of the flags, a central plaza area, Flagler Park signage at the Northeast corner, seating area, picnic tables, two shade coverings, and a Seminole-inspired brick paving pattern within the center of the park. The picnic tables and benches will be more purposefully placed for functionality. The estimated project cost is \$260,399.00 and does not include the sculptures which will be done by Okeechobee Main Street. This item was for informational purposes only, no official action was required.

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to approve Agreement Number Z3453 with the State of Florida, Division of Emergency Management, for request of funds from Federal Emergency Management Agency for damages from Hurricane Ian (DR-4673) [as presented in **Exhibit 3**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. Administrator Ritter reviewed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23 Priorities Plan, utilizing a ten-slide Power Point presentation [displaying the same information as presented in **Exhibit 4**], which has been added to the official minute file. He reviewed the City's mission and vision statements, and milestones for FY 2021-22. He then highlighted the strategic planning projections and major initiatives with three levels of priority with the projected costs as budgeted. This item was for informational purposes only, no official action was required.

**VII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE**

- Continuing to work on a number of ordinances to be considered this year, including the Code Enforcement lien reduction and matrix, fireworks, stormwater, and the removal of hurricane shutters and sections of the Code to be amended, abolished, or added due to the adoption of the new Charter;
- Finalizing the review of the Revised Planning Staff Report for Petition No. 22-003-SE;
- Continuing the work on the lease/title for Cattlemen's Square;
- Discussing environmental issues with the City Commerce Center and reviewing the current covenants;
- Potential appeal of a ruling by the Code Enforcement Special Magistrate.

**VIII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

- No updates provided at this time.

**IX. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member Chandler

- Thanked Administrator Ritter, Attorney Fumero, and Clerk Gamiotea for their work in keeping the Council up to date and accountable;
- Expressed his appreciation to Mayor Watford for being so involved in the community and his commitment to serve the office of Mayor.

IX. COUNCIL COMMENTS CONTINUED

Council Member Jarriel thanked the Clerk and Staff for the planning and effort that went into the Investiture Ceremony, especially after learning the County Commission and School Board do not offer such an event for their elected officials.

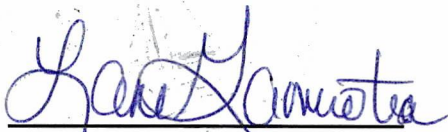
Council Member McAuley expressed that he is looking forward to working more with the Staff and is honored to be sitting by the legendary Mayor Watford.

Vice Mayor Clark conveyed her apologies for being unable to attend the Investiture Ceremony due to her family Christmas celebration.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:04 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.