



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
APRIL 4, 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 April 4, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast (SE) 3rd Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Mayor Watford; 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., 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- A. There were no requests for items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.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 Council Member Jarriel and Vice Mayor Clark to approve the agenda as published.
Motion Carried Unanimously.
- C. There were no comment cards submitted for public participation for issues not on the agenda.

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

- A. Mr. Jeffrey Fadley was recognized by Mayor Watford for his years of volunteerism. He was presented with a framed Certificate of Appreciation, read into the record as follows: **"The City of Okeechobee, Florida recognizes the valuable contribution of community involvement and hereby extends this expression of grateful appreciation to Jeffrey A. Fadley for faithful service as a dedicated Member appointed to the Okeechobee Utility Authority Board of Directors, March 1, 2011 through March 1, 2023."**

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Motion and second by Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member Jarriel to dispense with the reading and approve the March 7, 2023, Minutes [as presented]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

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

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and McAuley to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1271, updating the Five-Year Schedule of Capital Improvements to the Comprehensive Plan [as presented in **Exhibit 1**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney John Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1271, as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA, UPDATING THE FIVE-YEAR SCHEDULE OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS OF THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS MANDATED BY FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 163.3177(3)(b); PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Member Jarriel and Vice Mayor Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1271. There were no comments from the public. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:08 P.M.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Mr. Russ Brown, Provost of Indian River State College, Dixon Hendry Campus in Okeechobee, provided an update on their request to lease a portion of state-owned property at the former boys' school [located at 7200 Highway 441 North] which is being addressed through House Bill 1603. The Bill has passed unanimously through three committees. It will now go before the House, and for public comment, from there, it will go before the Senate as a consent agenda item.
- B. Ms. Tammy Cook-Weedon, Director of Landscape Architecture with Calvin, Giordano, and Associates, Inc. (CGA) provided an update, via Zoom, on the progress of the Flagler Park Master Plan utilizing a 19-slide Power Point presentation [as presented in **Exhibit 2**]. All designs and improvements are being proposed within the budgetary constraints of \$300,000.00 per park.

VII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- B. Continued. The conceptual designs are complete for Butterfly Square, Block F, Park No. 6 (CGA Project Park 7), Settler's Square, Block A, Park No. 4 (CGA Project Park No. 5), Seminole Square, Block G, Park No. 3 (CGA Project Park No. 4) 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.

This presentation focused on the proposed design for Speckled Perch Square, Block L, Park No. 2 (CGA Project Park No. 3). Ms. Cook-Weedon gave an overview of the original concepts for the park and conveyed a request from Okeechobee Main Street to consider modifying the concept to include all aspects of the wildlife and changing the name to Lake Okeechobee Square. She provided a more detailed overview of the conceptual designs honoring this request. Elements of the park include a replica of Lake Okeechobee created with a reflective surface, featuring a large jumping bass sculpture in the center, and surrounded by sculptures of various other local wildlife. The design includes the potential to add educational signs or a kiosk with information about each of the animals. **There was no objection from the Council regarding the change in conceptual design and name from Speckled Perch Square to Lake Okeechobee Square.** This item was for informational purposes only, no official action was required.

- C. Motion and second by Council Member Jarriel and Vice Mayor Clark to approve [and authorize Mayor Watford to execute a] letter [to the State of Florida Division of Historical Resources] approving the placement of a Historical Marker at [the former] Primitive Baptist Church [located at 1003 Southwest (SW) 3rd Avenue, Legal Description: Lots 9 through 12 of Block 8, SOUTH OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 1, Page 12 and Plat Book 5, Page 7, Okeechobee County Public Records, as presented in **Exhibit 3**]. The request was presented by Ms. Magi Cable, President of the Okeechobee Historical Society (OHS), who displayed two photos, one depicting placement of the marker, and one showing the information that will be on the marker, which were incorporated into the official minute file. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- D. Motion and second by Council Members Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to approve [and authorize Mayor Watford to execute a] letter [of support to the State of Florida Division of Historical Resources] allowing the OHS to apply for a grant for placement of a Historical Marker at [the former] Primitive Baptist Church [located at 1003 SW 3rd Avenue, Legal Description: Lots 9 through 12 of Block 8, SOUTH OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 1, Page 12 and Plat Book 5, Page 7, Okeechobee County Public Records, as presented in **Exhibit 4**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- E. County Fire Chief Ralph Franklin distributed a three-page written report, covering January through March 2023. They responded to 470 incidents, of which 402 were for emergency medical services, with an average response time of 4 minutes, 47 seconds; and completed 33 inspections [as presented in **Exhibit 7**]. Chief Franklin announced his retirement and introduced Chief Earl Wooten. This item was for informational purposes only, no official action was required.
- F. Motion and second by Council Member Chandler and Vice Mayor Clark to approve Personnel changes and amendments to various Chapters of the Personnel Handbook Policies and Procedures (Handbook) [as presented in **Exhibit 5**]. The changes are as follows:
 - 1. Change the job title only for General Services Coordinator to be General Services Director.
 - 2. Discontinue the policy for new hires and promotions effective April 7, 2023, that withholds \$1000.00 from their annual salary while on probation. However, Police Officers Not Certified beginning Salary will be \$1000.00 less than the Certified Minimum Salary.
 - 3. Remove all references to the Fire Department and/or staff throughout the Handbook.
 - 4. Chapter 1-General Information, City Departments. Remove Fire Department, add Administration Department with summary of duties, amend language in paragraphs for the Police, Public Works, Finance, and General Services to be consistent with the new charter language, Code Book Chapter 2 Article III amendments, and Code Section Reference numbers. Clarify that the City Administrator is the Department Head for the Administration, Finance, General Services, and Public Works Departments, with supervision by the Finance Director, General Services Director, and Public Works Director respectively.
 - 5. Chapter 2-Employment, Application Policy, new wording as follows:
 - 1. When there is a job vacancy, an employment opportunity will be noticed as provided in the Hiring Process section and an application packet created, excluding positions appointed by the City Council (City Administrator, City Clerk, and Chief of Police). The City Council will determine the application packet, search and selection process on a case-by-case basis for those positions.
 - 2. To be considered an applicant, individuals must complete and submit the application packet and any additional required materials on the instruction page, to the Office of the City Clerk.

VII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

F. Continued.

3. The application packet consists of City forms that include but are not limited to: Application with the specific job title being applied for, Job Description, Personal Inquiry Waiver, Veterans Preference Eligibility, and Past Employment Verification.
4. A submittal cut-off time and date will be set for all employment opportunities. NO APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED AFTER THE CUT OFF TIME AND DATE. In situations where qualified applications have not been received or there are multiple employment opportunities for the same job title, the Personnel Administrator may notice the position is open until filled, but should be done only when absolutely necessary.
6. Chapter 2-Employment, Types of Appointments, Excluded Positions, last two sentences in fourth paragraph, new wording as follows: The City Administrator, Chief of Police, and Personnel Administrator are by Charter or ordinance appointed by the City Council and serve at the pleasure of the City Council. Effective January 3, 2027, the City Clerk position will no longer be an elected position and will be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the City Council.
7. Chapter 2-Employment. Remove the Step Pay Plan section, per City Council action on August 2, 2022, to discontinue effective October 1, 2022.
8. Chapter 3-Employee Benefits, Paid Holidays, Alternatives. Change Monday to Friday and Friday to Thursday, and in paragraph No.1, replace pay period with work week.
9. Chapter 5-Hours, Pay, and Safety, Workweek and Attendance. Correct Police Department work week to Sunday 0001 a.m. through Saturday 1200 p.m.
10. Chapter 7-Employee Relations, Grievance Procedures, Grievance Committee, Under Composition, new wording as follows: There shall be three members of the Committee. One regular and one alternate member from the Police Department, one regular and one alternate member from the Departments of Finance, Administration, General Services, and Public Works; and one regular and one alternate member from the City Clerk's Office. They shall be appointed by the City Council. Under Quorum, a quorum shall consist of two members present and voting.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

- G. Motion and second by Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member Jarriel to approve [and authorize Mayor Watford to execute] a letter of support for Comcast's grant applications for expansion of services [as presented in **Exhibit 6**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VIII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Opinion of Title related to Cattlemen's Square submitted to the Hamrick Trustees and Centennial Park submitted to Administrator Ritter;
- Working on an ordinance regulating hurricane shutters, will include suspending enforcement during hurricane season;
- Incorporated edits from Public Works Director Allen into the proposed ordinance on storm water;
- Met with engineer and Administrator Ritter regarding the Commerce Center South Florida Water Management District permitting issues;
- Revisions to the application for a code enforcement lien reduction in progress;
- Work continues on updates to the Code of Ordinances related to the new Charter;
- Food Truck ordinance draft will be discussed at the Planning Board meeting on Thursday, April 20, 2023;
- Priority is being given to an ordinance regarding mandatory water and wastewater connections.

IX. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Misinformation, posted on social media, regarding the pending food truck ordinance was addressed by meeting with the individuals involved, was well received;
- Encouraged Council Members to schedule a time with Sandra Pearce to have their official pictures taken;
- Received a quote from a consultant for a Salary Comparison Study, for \$18,500.00, we budgeted \$14,000.00, will be brought to the Council as a request to piggyback from another agency;
- It may be time for the Council to consider hiring staff for a full-fledged Human Resources Department;
- The 16-acre unplatted parcel located North of East North Park Street and just West of the City Limits continues to move forward to be developed, current proposal is a Culver's restaurant and a carwash;
- Responded that a medical marijuana dispensary was being proposed at 510 East North Park Street;
- Responded that the SW 7th Avenue project has not progressed, but Mr. Stephen's Northeast apartment project has;
- Responded that the SE City-owned lot cannot be sold [due to it being a non-conforming lot, except to a contiguous property owner], and we are waiting on the Okeechobee Utility Authority regarding the sale of the SW lots.

X. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler inquired whether there were any ordinances prohibiting medical marijuana dispensaries within the City; it was explained this was preempted by State Statutes.

Council Member Jarriel stated his desire to have more public participation at Council meetings.

Council Member McAuley expressed appreciation to Magi Cable for her work on the museum at the Primitive Baptist Church site.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:15 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.