



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
MAY 2, 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 May 2, 2023, at 6:05 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 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. Under IV. Presentations and Proclamations, Item B., Recognition of Officer Garrett Kelly, and Item C., Recognition of Finance Director India Riedel, were added.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to approve the agenda as amended.
Motion Carried Unanimously.
- C. One comment card was submitted by Mr. Benjamin Bolan, advocating for local government control to remain at the local level and expressing concern regarding the number of pre-emption bills currently before the Legislature.

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

- A. Mayor Watford proclaimed May as Mental Health Awareness Month. A Proclamation was presented to both Ms. Leah Suarez, Chief Executive Office of Our Village Okeechobee, and Ms. Maria Roma, Program Director of Suncoast Mental Health, and was read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, mental health and substance use conditions affect individuals, families, and communities across Okeechobee County, Florida, and the Nation; and Whereas, good mental health is a key component in a child's healthy development. Children's Mental Health Week and National Prevention Week provide the opportunity to focus on these important matters, while celebrating the accomplishments of children and families affected by mental health concerns and substance use. It is imperative that a visible, united effort by community members be launched and sustained to prevent substance use and promote mental wellness; and Whereas, it is important that youth, their families, and communities learn about the warning signs of mental health disorders, substance use, and where to obtain necessary assistance and services. Open dialogue is an essential component to fight stigma and encourage those who might benefit from services to seek help; and Whereas there is a need for access to comprehensive services that are family-driven, youth guided, culturally and linguistically competent, and community based. Individuals would also benefit from the integration of behavioral health in primary care, education, and child welfare; and Whereas, all citizens, agencies, and organizations interested in advancing innovative strategies addressing children's behavioral health including prevention can unite to promote effective services. Promoting mental health and wellness leads to higher overall productivity, better educational outcomes, lower crime rates, stronger economies, lower health care costs, improved family life, improved quality of life and increased lifespan. Studies show that the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are felt by people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status; and Whereas, the City of Okeechobee recognizes the impact of awareness, education, access to services and the importance of mental health and well-being to an individual's success and supports the implementation of trauma informed approaches through the systems of care. 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 May 2023 as Mental Health Awareness Month in the City of Okeechobee."**
- B. Item Added: Police Chief Donald Hagan recognized Officer Garrett Kelly, who was honored and presented an Outstanding Patrolman Award from the Treasure Coast 10-13 Club, at an event on April 29, 2023, for rendering aid while off-duty.
- C. Item Added: Mayor Watford recognized Finance Director India Riedel as a recent graduate of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Motion by Council Member McAuley and Vice Mayor Clark to dispense with the reading and approve the Minutes from April 18, 2023 [as presented]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Mr. Tommy Clay, Chairperson, Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) Board of Directors, provided the quarterly update on various projects (last update was January 26, 2023). Various projects in the Southwest Service Area are progressing. However, one was delayed during the initial phase to relocate gopher tortoises. Project 3, Okee-Tantie Force Main/State Road 78 Corridor (for Bass Pro), has 30 percent of drawings complete. A pump station is being built at the Pine Ridge Park Project. The Treasure Island Project has potential funding and is in the design phase. Approximately \$2.5 million of the estimated \$6 million needed has been secured for the Southwest (SW) 5th Street Septic to Sewer Conversion Project. The OUA looks forward to the Council adopting an ordinance mandating connection to water and wastewater systems. The Board is reviewing personnel matters and succession planning.

- B. City Clerk Gamiotea, Public Works Director David Allen, Police Chief Donald Hagan, and General Services Director Patty Burnette provided updates on their respective departments, with information from January 1, 2023, through April 30, 2023, as follows:

Clerk Gamiotea (three-page report added to the official minute file):

- Received and responded to 118 public records requests; requests in 2022 totaled 322;
- Multiple records management projects in the works, including Pension records;
- Processed three new hires, one new elected official, and three returning elected officials,
- Processed out two employees and one elected official;
- Researched and presented amendments to the Personnel Policies and Procedures handbook;
- Monitor and process Family and Medical Leave Act requests and proper notice;
- Created 29 newspaper advertisements and 40 public notices;
- Processed two ordinances and one resolution, adopted to date, continuing to work with City Attorney on ordinances amending the Code due to new Charter ;
- Citizen Boards, processed out three Members, completed onboarding of one new Member and four renewals, advertising campaigns for vacant OUA Alternate Member;
- Created certificates and awards presented at Council meetings;
- Monitor department budget;
- Created and mailed out 41 birthday cards and four sympathy/get well cards on behalf of the City.

Director Allen:

- Bid Documents for the baffle box on Southeast 4th Street are complete; ready to be advertised;
- SW 5th Avenue project requires a second engineer do the inspection for the Florida Department of Transportation grant, bid documents being reviewed;
- Working on re-establishing power to the buildings at Primitive Baptist Church; water has been restored to the outside to allow work to be done;
- Retention pond at River Run cleaned;
- Supply line issues with new backhoe; new F250 to be delivered May 3, 2023;
- Paint for striping delivered; stop bars and crosswalks are the priority.

Chief Hagan:

- Full staff of officers; one dispatcher vacancy;
- Five patrol units ordered, three arrived quickly, two arrived later and are pending outfitting;
- Proud of new officers, continue to recruit people who care about the community;
- 831 calls for service, majority for trespassing;
- Issued 802 traffic warnings and 472 citations;
- 32 open and 35 closed cases in Code Enforcement;
- Addressing 28 delinquent Business Tax Receipts.

Director Burnette:

- 173 permits issued, fees collected for Fiscal Year total \$63,000.00;
- Mobile Home Park, SW 5th and 6th, new owner, 6 permits for new homes, encroachment issues to be resolved;
- Three text amendments regarding food trucks, stormwater drainage, and storm shutters to be reviewed at May 18, 2023, Planning Board meeting;
- Park Street Commerce Center, six applications submitted, site plans for Culver's Restaurant and a carwash;
- Seven-unit multi-family project on Northwest section waiting on building permits.

- C. In the absence of Administrator Gary Ritter, Council Member Chandler provided an update on Veterans' Square of FLAGLER Park, Block E/Park No.1. This was followed by a discussion regarding the potential relocation of the monuments.

VI. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- C. Continued. Mr. Gregg Maynard and Mr. Charlie Norris spoke on behalf of local veterans, conveying their desire to be involved. This item was for informational purposes only, no official action was required.

VII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Excavation services bid package reviewed;
- Tax Abatement program to be presented at a future meeting;
- Final draft of ordinances regulating food trucks and mandatory water and wastewater connections completed;
- Draft ordinances regulating storm shutters and addressing changes in stormwater regulations in progress;
- Opinion of title regarding Centennial Park completed, draft of Cattlemen's Square lease provided to Hamrick Trust;
- Continuing to work with Clerk's Office on City Code updates related to newly adopted Charter.

VIII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Administrator Ritter was absent.

IX. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler thanked Staff for providing reports and Mr. Bolan for his support.

Council Member Jarriel encouraged all to attend regular meetings.

Council Member McAuley announced he would not be in attendance for the May 16, 2023, meeting.

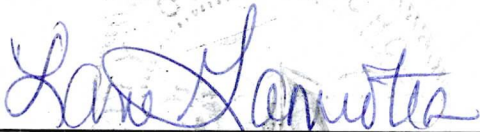
Vice Mayor Clark shared City Police Officers were professional, polite, and thorough during a recent encounter she had.

Mayor Watford reminded all of the fundraiser for Our Village Okeechobee on May 13, 2023, at the KOA.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:55 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.