



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA  
MAY 16, 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 16, 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 Don Hanna, 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., Vice Mayor Monica M. Clark, Council Members Noel A. Chandler, and Robert "Bob" J. Jarriel. David R. McAuley was absent with consent.

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- A. There were no requests for items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.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 Members Jarriel and Chandler 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. Mayor Watford proclaimed the week of May 21 through 27, 2023 as Public Works Week. The Proclamation was presented to Public Works Director David Allen and read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, public works professionals focus on infrastructure, facilities, emergency management, and services that are of vital importance to sustainable and resilient communities and the public health, high quality of life, and well-being of the people of; and Whereas, these infrastructures, facilities, and services could not be provided without the dedicated efforts of public works professionals, who are federally mandated first responders, and the engineers, managers, and employees at all levels of government and the private sector, who are responsible for rebuilding, improving, and protecting our nation's transportation, waste systems, public buildings, parks, and other structures and facilities essential for our citizens; and Whereas, it is in the public interest for the citizens, civic leaders, and children in the City of Okeechobee to gain knowledge and maintain ongoing interest and understanding of the importance of public works first responders and public works programs in their respective communities; and Whereas, the year 2023 marks the 63<sup>rd</sup> annual National Public Works Week sponsored by the American Public Works Association. Now Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, Florida, do hereby proclaim the week of May 21 through 27, 2023, as "National Public Works Week" in the City of Okeechobee, and call upon all citizens to pay tribute to our public works professionals, engineers, managers and employees and to recognize the substantial contributions they make to protecting our national health, safety, and quality of life."**
- B. Mayor Watford proclaimed the month of May 2023 as Building Safety Month. The Proclamation was presented to Building Official Jeffery Newell and read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, the City of Okeechobee is committed to recognizing that our growth and strength depends on the safety and essential role our homes, buildings and infrastructure play, both in everyday life and when disasters strike; and WHEREAS, our confidence in the resilience of these buildings that make up our community is achieved through the devotion of vigilant guardians—building safety and fire prevention officials, architects, engineers, builders, tradespeople, design professionals, laborers, plumbers and others in the construction industry—who work year-round to ensure the safe construction of buildings; and WHEREAS, these guardians are dedicated members of the International Code Council, a nonprofit, that brings together local, state, territorial, tribal, and federal officials who are experts in the built environment to create and implement the highest-quality codes to protect us in the buildings where we live, learn, work, play; and Whereas, these modern building codes include safeguards to protect the public from hazards such as hurricanes, snowstorms, tornadoes, wildland fires, floods, and earthquakes; and Whereas, Building Safety Month is sponsored by the International Code Council to remind the public about the critical role of our communities' largely unknown protectors of public safety—our local code officials—who assure us of safe, sustainable, and affordable buildings that are essential to our prosperity;**



#### IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS CONTINUED

- B. Continued. and Whereas, It Starts with You, the theme for Building Safety Month 2023, encourages us all to raise awareness about building safety on a personal, local and global scale; and Whereas, each year, in observance of Building Safety Month, people all over the world are asked to consider the commitment to improve building safety, resilience and economic investment at home and in the community, and to acknowledge the essential service provided to all of us by local and state building departments, fire prevention bureaus and federal agencies in protecting lives and property; and Now Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, 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 Building Safety Month."
- C. Sergeants Jessica Francis and K-9 Luna were recognized by Mayor Watford and Chief Donald Hagan for their years of service. Sergeant Francis was presented with a pen, engraved with her name, and a framed Longevity Service Certificate, read into the record as follows: **"In recognition of your five years of service, hard work, and dedication to the City, its citizens, and your fellow employees from May 2, 2018 through May 2, 2023."** Sergeant K-9 Luna was presented with a leather K-9 badge holder and personalized treat jar.

#### V. CONSENT AGENDA

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

- A. Approve the April 2023 Warrant Register [in the amounts: General Fund, \$753,904.50; Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$23,575.99; Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$112,623.74; Industrial Development Fund, \$1,377.00; and Appropriations Grant Fund, \$675.00; [as presented]; and
- B. Ratify the appointment of John Creasman to the General Employees' Pension Fund Board of Trustees as the Fifth Member, term being May 1, 2023, through December 31, 2025, replacing Dawn Martin.
- Motion Carried Unanimously.**

#### VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Motion and second by Council Member Jarriel and Vice Mayor Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1273, for Rezoning Petition No. 22-001-R, submitted by Rene Griffith, Registered Agent, on behalf of the property owner, Be A Man, Buy Land, LLC., to rezone 0.36 +/- unplatted acres from Holding to Industrial. The property is a triangular-shaped vacant, unaddressed parcel, located contiguous to the West-side of the East City Limits Boundary Line, North of the railroad tracks, and South of Northeast 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The proposed use is outdoor storage [as presented in **Exhibit 1**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney John Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1273, as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM HOLDING TO INDUSTRIAL; PETITION NO. 23-001-R; AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member Jarriel to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1273 and set June 20, 2023, as the final public hearing date.

Planner Ben Smith, attending electronically via Zoom, presented the Planning Staff Report which finds the request is reasonably compatible with adjacent uses and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Planning Staff and Planning Board recommend approval. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1274, amending Chapter 18, Code Enforcement Procedure, to include a Fine Reduction Process [as presented in **Exhibit 2**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Fumero read into the record the title only of proposed Ordinance No. 1274 as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; RELATING TO REQUESTS FOR CODE ENFORCEMENT FINE REDUCTIONS, AMENDING PART II OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE WITHIN CHAPTER 18 CODE ENFORCEMENT, ARTICLE II CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURE, BY SPECIFICALLY AMENDING SECTION 18-38 POWERS OF MAGISTRATE; SPECIFICALLY AMENDING SECTION 18-39 FINE REDUCTION REQUEST PROCESS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HERewith; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**



## VI. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- B. Continued. Motion and second by Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member Jarriel to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1274 and set June 20, 2023, as the final public hearing date. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. Attorney Fumero reviewed the options for a tax abatement program, utilizing a 15-slide Power Point presentation, a copy of which has been incorporated into the official minute file. There are three programs: Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption, Tax Exemption for Affordable Housing, and the Live Local Act 2023. **Following discussion, the Council by consensus agreed not to pursue the matter further.**
- D. Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to approve closing City Hall at 1:00 P.M. on Friday, September 1, 2023, to fumigate City Hall and the Public Safety Building. City Hall will remain closed through Monday, September 4, 2023 for the Labor Day holiday. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- E. The Annual Evaluation of Administrator Ritter was reviewed. On May 2, 2023, Clerk Gamiotea disbursed individual evaluation forms to the Mayor and Council to complete prior to the meeting. The evaluations consist of 14 questions and have been incorporated into the official minute file. The Tally Sheet, providing the final scores as follows: Chandler 5.0, Clark 4.9, Jarriel 5.0, McAuley 4.9, and Watford 4.9; for an overall average of 4.9 out of 5.0, has also been incorporated into the official minute file.

## VII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Reviewed Request for Proposals for audit services;
- Drafting ordinance to merge the Police and Fire Pension Plans;
- Ordinances regarding stormwater management, the installation and removal of storm shutters, and the regulation of food trucks scheduled for discussion at the Planning Board Meeting on May 18, 2023;
- Researching regulations for the distribution and sale of fireworks.

## VIII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Ordinance addressing mandatory water and wastewater connections will be reviewed at a future Council meeting;
- Reminder of the Memorial Day Event coordinated by the VFW South Post, scheduled for Saturday, May 27, 2023, at 10:00 A.M.

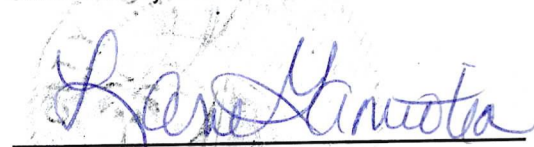
## IX. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Jarriel commended the Police Department for their quick response to a citizen complaint.

## X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 6:51 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.