



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA**  
**SEPTEMBER 5, 2023, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**AND FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING**  
**REVISED SEPTEMBER 20, 2023, DRAFT 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 5, 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 Matt Bowen, Christ Fellowship Church; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member McAuley.

**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A. There were no requests for items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.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 Members McAuley and Jarriel 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 recognized Mr. Rick Chartier for his years of volunteerism. He was presented with a framed Certificate of Appreciation read into the record as follows: **"The City Council of the City of Okeechobee recognizes the valuable contribution of community involvement and hereby extends this expression of grateful appreciation to Rick Chartier for faithful service as a dedicated member appointed to the City of Okeechobee Planning Board, the Board of Adjustment, and the Design Review Board, March 30, 2019 through August 30, 2023."**

B. Mayor Watford and Police Chief Donald Hagan recognized Detective Sergeant Almazan by presenting him with an engraved crystal mantel clock and a framed certificate read into the record as follows: **"Longevity Service Certificate presented to Aurelio Almazan in recognition of your 15 years of service, hard work, and dedication to the City, its citizens, and your fellow employees from September 5, 2008, through September 5, 2023. Presented on this 5<sup>th</sup> day of September 5, 2023 on behalf of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee, Florida."**

C. Mayor Watford proclaimed September as Hunger Action Month. The Proclamation was presented to Pastor Matt Bowen, on behalf of the Treasure Coast Food Bank, and read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, hunger and poverty remain issues of grave concern in the United States, the State of Florida, the Treasure Coast, and the City of Okeechobee with 7,467 family households in Okeechobee County unable to afford the basic costs of living; and Whereas, the City Council for the City of Okeechobee is committed to taking steps to raise awareness about the need to combat hunger in every part of our City and to provide additional resources that the citizens of Okeechobee need; and Whereas, the City of Okeechobee is committed to working with the Treasure Coast Food Bank in mobilizing people about the role and importance of food banks and other hunger relief organizations in addressing hunger and bringing attention to the need to devote more resources and attention to hunger issues; and Whereas, food banks and hunger relief organizations across the country, including the Treasure Coast Food Bank, coordinated Hunger Action Day on September 15, 2023, and will continue to host numerous events throughout the month of September to shed light on this important issue and encourage involvement in efforts to end hunger in their local community. 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 September 2023 as "Hunger Action Month."**

**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

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

A. Dispense with the reading and approve the Minutes for August 15, 2023 [as presented]; and

B. Reappoint Mr. Ray Worley to the Police Officers' Pension Fund Board of Trustees (City Resident 2 of 2), term being October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2027 [as presented in **Exhibit 1**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR ORDINANCE ADOPTION CONTINUED FROM AUGUST 15, 2023, AT 6:19 P.M.**

- A. The floor was opened for discussion on the motion made by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member Chandler to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1276, as amended on August 15, 2023, for Land Development Regulations (LDRs) Text Amendment Application No. 23-003-TA, adding storm shutter regulations within Chapter 90 of the Code of Ordinances [as presented in **Revised Exhibit 2**].

**Motion** by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member Jarriel, to **amend proposed Ordinance No. 1276 as follows**: in the ordinance title, replace "PROTOCOLS" with "GUIDELINES" and add "PROHIBITING STORM SHUTTERS FROM BEING LEFT IN PLACE AND PROVIDING EXCEPTIONS." Add a sixth whereas clause that reads "for the purposes of this Ordinance, underlined type shall denote additions to and ~~strike-through~~ shall denote deletions from the original text". In Section 2 of the ordinance: second paragraph, replace Section 90-84 title from "Storm Shutters Protocol for Commercial and Residential Structures" with "Storm Shutters Guidelines for Commercial and Residential Structures." Paragraph (1), first sentence, delete "building", and "both as architectural features on the building and" to read "Storm shutters or storm panel systems permanently installed, hung, or attached to a commercial or residential structure which serve as protective coverings when closed in the event of a storm shall not remain in a closed/secured position so as to block windows or doors unless a hurricane or tropical storm warning or watch has been issued." Paragraphs (1) and (2), second sentence, add at the end: "for all window and/or door openings which serve as the sole ingress/egress for a room to the exterior of the structure and within 4-weeks of the end of the storm event for all other windows and doors." Delete the third sentence in Paragraphs (1) and (2) that reads "If a hurricane or tropical storm watch occurs during the 2-week period, a new 2-week period shall begin upon publication of a new hurricane or tropical storm warning."

**Roll Call Vote on Motion to Amend**: Chandler-Yea, Clark-Yea, Jarriel-Yea, McAuley-Yea, Watford-Yea.

**Motion to Amend Carried.**

There were no comments from the public. **Roll Call Vote on Motion As Amended**: Chandler-Yea, Clark-Yea, Jarriel-Yea, McAuley-Yea, Watford-Yea.

**Motion Carried As Amended.**

**MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR ORDINANCE ADOPTION AT 6:24 P.M.**

**VII. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:24 P.M.**

- A. Mayor Watford announced the purpose of this Public Hearing is to consider the first reading of ordinances for the proposed Millage Rate levy and proposed Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024.
- B. Mayor Watford announced the proposed Millage Rate levy represented 2.84 percent more than the roll-back rate of 6.1801 computed pursuant to Florida Statutes 200.065(1).
- C. Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1279, levying a Millage Rate of 6.3556 on all real and tangible personal property for proposed FY October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024 [as presented in **Exhibit 3**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Greg Hyden read the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1279 into the record 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, 2023 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2024; PROVIDING THAT 6.3556 PER THOUSAND DOLLAR VALUATION SHALL NOT BE LEVIED ON HOMESTEAD PROPERTY; THAT 6.3556 VALUATION SHALL BE USED FOR GENERAL CITY PURPOSES; THAT SAID MILLAGE RATE IS 2.84 PERCENT MORE THAN THE ROLL-BACK RATE OF 6.1801 COMPUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLORIDA STATUTE 200.065(1); PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**"

Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1279 and set the final Public Hearing at 6:00 P.M. on September 25, 2023. There were no comments from the public.

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**VII. FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED**

- D.** Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member Jarriel, to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1280, adopting the annual Budget for FY October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024.  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Hyden read the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1280 into the record as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING AN ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; FOR THE FY BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2023, AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2024; 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 AND SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”**

Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and McAuley to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1280 and set the final Public Hearing at 6:00 P.M. on September 25, 2023.

Finance Director Riedel clarified the changes within the budget presented include a cost of living \$2.00/hour salary adjustment and the lower ad valorem rate. These changes were based on the consensus of the Council at the Second Budget Workshop held on August 15, 2023.

There were no comments from the public. **Motion** by Council Member Jarriel, second by Vice Mayor Clark **to amend proposed Ordinance No. 1280 to utilize the \$109,094.00 being transferred-out from the General Fund to the Capital Improvement Project Funds, increasing the projected expenditures from \$1,000,000.00 to \$1,109,094.00 for infrastructure projects.**

**Roll Call Vote on the Motion to Amend:** Chandler-Yea, Clark-Yea, Jarriel-Yea, McAuley-Yea, Watford-Yea.

**Motion to Amend Carried.**

**Roll Call Vote on the Motion As Amended:** Chandler-Yea, Clark-Yea, Jarriel-Yea, McAuley-Yea, Watford-Yea.

**Motion Carried As Amended.**

**MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:44 P.M.**

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

- A.** Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to approve the ranking Carr, Riggs, and Ingram LLC, 98 points, and CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, 85.5 points, and award a 3-year Contract for Request for Proposals No. ADM 01-32-07-23, Professional Auditing Services to Carr, Riggs, and Ingram LLC [as presented in **Exhibit 5**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- B.** Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member Chandler to approve the renewal of Property and Casualty Insurance coverages with Public Risk Management with an effective date of October 1, 2023 [as presented in **Exhibit 6**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C.** Motion by Council Member Chandler, second by Vice Mayor Clark to allow Freedom Baptist Church to use City property located at 1003 Southwest 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (Primitive Baptist Church) for overflow parking on Sunday mornings and other special times. After discussion, it was agreed a Memorandum of Understanding addressing maintenance and insurance will be drafted, this matter will be brought back before the Council.  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- D.** Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to award a contract for Request for Proposal No. PW 03-32-05-23 Landscape Maintenance and Installation Services to Nunez Lawncare and Landscaping for October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024, [not to exceed the amount of \$100,000.00] with options to renew for two additional one-year terms [as presented in **Exhibit 8**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- E.** A Biomedical Operation is interested in purchasing an acre of a 2.5-acre Lot in the City Commerce Center to relocate from Miami. **The consensus of the Council was to not negotiate a land purchase with this buyer.**

**IX. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE**

- Working on Technical Review Committee Code amendment.
- Second review of License Plate Camera Reader Agreement.
- Satisfaction of Lien for Mary Koger completed.
- Continuing to address issues with the title for Cattlemen’s Square.
- Reviewing changes to the Code required with the adoption of the new Charter.

**X. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

- Attorney is reviewing the Developer’s Agreement and Covenants for a Final Plat Application.
- South Florida Water Management District has issued the permit for the City Commerce Center.
- Suggested Council consider amending the Code to broaden membership to City business owners, who reside outside the County, to serve on the Planning Board, the Board of Adjustment, and the Design Review Board. **There was a consensus of the Council to move forward with this amendment.**
- Proposed ban on medical marijuana dispensary businesses will be discussed at the next Planning Board meeting.

**XI. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Members Chandler and Jarriel noted comments to Attorney Hyden about medical marijuana dispensary operations.

Council Member Jarriel said he felt better about the budget.

Council Member Jarriel and Vice Mayor Clark again commented they were in favor of changing the Code to include business owners (see City Administrator’s update).

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:14 P.M.

Submitted By:

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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.