



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA**  
**JANUARY 2, 2024, 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 2, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast (SE) 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (AVE), Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Council Member McAuley; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Mayor Clark.

**II. ATTENDANCE**

City Clerk Lane Gamiotea called the roll. Members present to establish a quorum: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Vice Mayor Monica M. Clark, and 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A. There were no requests for items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.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 Jarriel and Chandler to approve the agenda as published.  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

C. One comment card was submitted for public participation for issues not on the agenda, by Ms. Regina Tolbert-Gary, introducing herself and her new non-profit. She is an advocate working towards uniting the community through various projects, with a current focus on honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. She requested permission to use Veterans Memorial Square of FLAGLER PARK, Block E/Park 1, for an event on January 15, 2024. It was explained this park is reserved for military-related events but there were other parks available. She was advised to contact General Services Staff to complete a Temporary Use Permit for her event.

**IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS**

A. Congratulations were extended when Administrator Ritter provided an update on the Human Resources Generalist position which was advertised internally. The panel, consisting of him, City Clerk Gamiotea, Police Chief Hagan, and Finance Director Riedel, interviewed four applicants and unanimously selected Heather Prince to fill the position.

**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to:

A. Dispense with the reading and approve the Minutes for December 5, 2023, [as presented in **Exhibit 1**]; and

B. Approve the November 2023 Warrant Register [in the amounts: General Fund, \$610,283.61; Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$32,438.82; Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$193,090.20; CDBG Fund, \$10,324.97; and Appropriations Grant Fund, \$9,885.25; as presented in **Exhibit 2**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1284, amending the Optional Forms of Benefits for the General Employees Retirement System [as presented in **Exhibit 3**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney John Fumero read the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1284 into the record as follows: "**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE FURTHER AMENDING THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE GENERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM, RESTATED PURSUANT TO ORDINANCE 1141; AMENDING SECTION 10, OPTIONAL FORMS OF BENEFITS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**"

Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member McAuley to approve the first reading and set February 6, 2024, as the Final Public Hearing date for proposed Ordinance No. 1284. **Roll Call Vote: Chandler-Yea, Clark-Yea, Jarriel-Yea, McAuley-Yea, Watford-Yea.**

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**



VI. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- B. Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member McAuley to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1285, amending Section 2-131 of the Code of Ordinances removing the Personnel Administrator duties from the City Clerk [as presented in **Exhibit 4**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Fumero read the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1285 into the record as follows: “**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE CODE OF ORDINANCES CHAPTER 2 ADMINISTRATION, ARTICLE III DEPARTMENTS, OFFICERS, AND EMPLOYEES, DIVISION 4 CITY CLERK, SECTION 2-131 GENERAL DUTIES TO REMOVE THE DUTY OF PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**”

Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member McAuley to approve the first reading and set February 6, 2024, as the Final Public Hearing date for proposed Ordinance No. 1285. **Roll Call Vote: Chandler-Yea, Clark-Yea, Jarriel-Yea, McAuley-Yea, Watford-Yea.**  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- C. Motion by Council Member Jarriel, second by Vice Mayor Clark to ratify the Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant Agreement No. P0497 with the State Department of Commerce, in the amount of \$20,000.00, to have a Market Feasibility Study, a Lodging Market Analysis and Industry Trend Report, and a Housing Market Profile prepared [as presented in **Exhibit 5**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- D. Motion by Council Member McAuley, second by Vice Mayor Clark to approve a Planning Advisory Service Agreement with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council to prepare a Market Feasibility Study, a Lodging Market Analysis and Industry Trend Report, and a Housing Market Profile, in the amount of \$20,000.00 as outlined in Grant Agreement No. P0497 [as presented in **Exhibit 6**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- E. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to approve the purchase of a Kayak Launch [to be installed at Centennial Park, 701 SE 6<sup>th</sup> AVE] from AccuDock in the amount of \$39,818.90 [as presented in **Exhibit 7**].

- F. Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to increase the Purchase Order [No. 63] to Transportation Solutions and Lighting, Inc./NSS [approved on August 2, 2022] to include shipping charges of \$850.00 [as presented in **Exhibit 8**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- G. Administrator Ritter presented for review and informational purposes a report submitted by MacVicar Consulting that highlighted Lake Okeechobee Operations, the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, and a graphic to show lake levels and stages. [as presented in **Exhibit 9**].

- H. Administrator Ritter provided a summary report of City Projects and Objectives for Fiscal Year 2023-24 utilizing an 18-slide power point presentation which has been added to the official minute file and labeled as **Exhibit 10**. Topics covered in the report were: changes with the adoption of the new Charter to the organizational chart. The City’s mission and vision statements. Comparison between the City and County in terms of population, ad valorem revenues, and acreage. The proposed anticipated budget expenditures. The City’s representation on local and regional boards/coalitions. Strategic planning and major initiatives. Updates on commercial, industrial, and residential developments. Grant projects. Major accomplishments in the previous Calendar Year and a list of projects for January through March 2024.

VII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Continuing to review the proposed Stormwater Management ordinance, ensuring to not duplicate what is already incorporated in the South Florida Water Management District regulations.
- Reviewed proposed Ordinances 1284 and 1285.
- Working on a Memorandum of Understanding with Freedom Baptist Church to address maintenance and insurance issues related to their use of City property for overflow parking.
- Reviewing the Live Local Act and potential impact on City.
- New legislation requires the Business Impact Statement be posted on the City’s website for certain Ordinances and Resolutions.
- The Legislative Session is early this year, will track changes and present to City.

**VIII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

Administrator Ritter provided no further updates.

**IX. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member Chandler is looking forward to another year and continued growth in the City.

Council Member Jarriel expressed he is thankful for the progress in 2023 and is anticipating more progress in 2024.

Council Member McAuley acknowledged he has learned much in the last year and is also looking towards the future and another great year.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:18 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.