



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 20, 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 February 20, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast (SE) 3rd Avenue (AVE), Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida (FL). The invocation was offered by Pastor Matt Bowen, Christ Fellowship Church and Police Department Chaplain; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Chandler.

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” Jarriel, and David R. McAuley.

III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

- A. Modifications to the agenda were as follows: item V.D., amend the motion to read, “to rescind the action taken on February 6, 2024, approving the sale of Police Vehicles through Insight Auctioneers, and approve the sale of Police Vehicles through GovDeals.com”; a copy of the power point presentation for item VIII.A., will be added and labeled as Exhibit 9; additional materials were distributed for Exhibit 7; and add item VIII.D., Exhibit 10.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to adopt the agenda as amended.
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 February 18 through 24, 2024, as Engineers Week, **Exhibit 1**. The Proclamation was presented to Mr. Steve Dobbs and was read into the record as follows: “**Whereas, engineers design, construct, and maintain the infrastructure and facilities that contribute to a high quality of life for all residents of the City of Okeechobee; and Whereas, the City of Okeechobee growth depends on engineers executing innovative, creative, and high-quality solutions to technical problems; and Whereas, the purpose of the FL Engineering Society is to advance the public welfare, promote the professional, social, and economic interests of the engineering professions, and stimulate and develop professional concepts among all engineers through education and excellence in practice; and Whereas, members of the FL Engineering Society and the American Council of Engineering Companies of FL are making strides to interact with the engineering education sector to prepare future engineers to maintain our economic leadership and quality of life; and Whereas, it is important that we recognize and honor the continuing contributions of America’s engineers. Now, Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, FL, do hereby proclaim February 18 through 24, 2024, as ‘Engineers Week’.**”

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to:
- A. Dispense with the reading and approve the Minutes for February 6, 2024, [as presented in **Exhibit 2**]; and
 - B. Approve the January 2024 Warrant Register [in the amounts: General Fund, \$640,319.15; Industrial Development Fund, \$267,096.54; Community Development Block Grant Fund, \$196,883.31; Public Facility Improvement Fund, \$35,615.78; Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$13,040.80; and Appropriations Grant Fund, \$4,622.25, as presented in **Exhibit 3**]; and
 - C. Approve the sale of Public Works Equipment through Insight Auctioneers [as presented in **Exhibit 4**]; and
 - D. Rescind action taken on February 6, 2024, approving the sale of Police Vehicles through Insight Auctioneers; and approve the sale of Police Vehicles through GovDeals.com [as presented in **Exhibit 5**].
Motion Carried Unanimously.

VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING FOR ORDINANCE ADOPTION AT 6:08 P.M.

The following items are quasi-judicial in nature. In accordance with section 286.0115, Florida Statutes (FS), an opportunity for persons to speak on each item will be made available after the applicant and staff have made their presentations on each item. All testimony, including public testimony and evidence, may be made under oath or affirmation. Additionally, each person who gives testimony may be subject to cross-examination. If you do not wish to be either cross-examined or sworn, your testimony will be given its due weight. The general public may request the Board to ask questions of staff or witnesses on their behalf. Any person presenting documents to the Council should provide the City Clerk with a minimum of 10 copies. Further details of the quasi-judicial procedure may be obtained from the Clerk. No verbatim record by a certified court reporter is made of these proceedings. Accordingly, any person who may seek to appeal any decision involving the matters noticed herein will be responsible for making a verbatim record of the testimony and evidence at these proceedings upon which any appeal is to be based (see Section 286.0105, FS.). In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 286.26, FS, persons needing a special accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact the City Clerk's office at 863-763-9814 seventy-two (72) hours in advance of this proceeding.

- A.** Motion by Council Member Chandler, second by Vice Mayor Clark, to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1283, regarding Rezoning Petition No. 23-002-R submitted by Jay Patel on behalf of the property owner, Jitendra Living Trust, to rezone 0.65+/- acres located at 201 South Parrott AVE, from Central Business District (CBD) to Heavy Commercial (CHV), for the purpose of expanding the existing Budgett Inn motel [as presented in **Exhibit 6**].

Motion Carried Unanimously.

City Attorney John Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1283 as follows: "**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FL; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM CBD TO CHV PETITION NO. 23-002-R; AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**"

Motion by Council Member Jarriel, second by Vice Mayor Clark, to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1283.

Attorney Fumero administered an oath to Mr. Ben Smith, City Planner of Morris-Depew Associates, Inc., 2914 Cleveland AVE, Ft. Myers, FL and Project Engineer for Mr. Patel, Mr. Steven Dobbs, of New Lines Engineering, 209 Northeast 2nd Street, Okeechobee, FL. Planner Smith, attending electronically via Zoom, presented the Planning Staff Report which finds the Petition consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, reasonably compatible with adjacent uses, and is consistent with the surrounding pattern of land use. The Planning Board unanimously recommends approval. During Council discussion, Planner Smith clarified the owner will not be able to increase the existing non-conforming structures. The new addition which is proposed to be free-standing from the existing structure would be required to meet current regulations. Mr. Dobbs added, the property owner is prepared to submit a Variance Petition, if required; and they also understood that should the existing nonconforming structure be destroyed, it would then have to be built to current regulations. There were no other public comments. Clerk Gamiotea stated for the record, 26 courtesy notices were mailed to the surrounding property owners with one returned undeliverable, advertisements and three signs on the subject property were properly posted. No objections or concerns have been received to date. **Roll Call Vote: Chandler – Yea, Clark – Yea, Jarriel – Yea, McAuley – Yea, Watford – Yea.**

Motion Carried Unanimously.

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:25 P.M.

VII. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:25 P.M.

- A.** Distributed at the beginning of the meeting was a copy of the revised Amended Declaration of Protective Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions, as requested by City Staff, which replaces the copy provided within **Exhibit 7**.

Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to approve with contingencies: that the applicant is responsible for obtaining all other permits and approvals from local, state, and federal agencies necessary for the development of the subject property; Final Plat Application No. 23-009-TRC/FP, replatting Lots 6 through 10, TAYLOR CREEK MANOR, Plat Book 3, Page 4, Okeechobee County public records, into a new Plat consisting of 12 lots (one for each townhome), common area and access tracts, titled BRIDGEWATER ON TAYLOR CREEK, submitted by John J. Rice, on behalf of property owner B&T Fair Investments, Inc., consisting of 1.39± acres and located at 116 SE 8th AVE [as present in **Exhibit 7** and as revised].

Planner Smith provided a brief overview of the development. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment. There were no comments from the public or Council.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:30 P.M.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Mr. Rob Williamson, of Evergreen Consulting, submitted a 16-slide power point presentation [a copy of which has been incorporated in the official minute file and labeled as **Exhibit 9**], which provided the results and recommendations after they completed a classification and compensation study. The goal is to bring all employees' salaries into the new market competitive pay ranges. The data from the external equity analysis by surveying the market to determine competitive salary wages provided 18 current employees' salaries are below the minimum salary range.

Mr. Williamson is recommending the City Council adopt the proposed numeric pay grades and market competitive pay ranges. Reassign classification to pay grades based on the market results and internal equity. Select an implementation methodology that aligns with the compensation philosophy, reduces competitive disadvantages, and aligns with the financial priorities of the City. Approve employees within their newly recommended market competitive pay ranges. The cost to bring the 18 employees to the minimum salary would be \$23,631.86. Administrator Ritter requested the Council consider approving these salary changes effective in the current Fiscal Year. Then, the City Council could later discuss how to best phase in the option of implementing tenure parity, that would adjust 45 employees' salaries and bring those to the average medium salary with a cost of \$220,459.67 or implementing comparative ratio option that would adjust 58 employees' salaries at a cost of \$279,39.83. There are a few additional steps Mr. Williamson and his staff need to complete before the project is closed out. **Consensus of the Council was to revisit the request at the next meeting in order to give them time to review the content and requested Administrator Ritter provide the list of the 18 employees and salary information, as well as provide a comparison of the current budget salary spreadsheet with job titles with the newly proposed pay grades and salaries.**

- B. Motion by Council Member Jarriel, second by Vice Mayor Clark to have Staff draft the appropriate document amending the employee longevity service awards policy, using Option 3 [as presented in **Exhibit 8**], with the addition of starting it at 10 years at 1 percent, then every five years thereafter increasing 1 percent each time, with a maximum at 40 years at 7 percent. The new policy will be retroactive as of October 1, 2023.

Motion Carried with Mayor Watford voting no.

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Clark, second by Council Member Jarriel, to have Staff draft the appropriate document amending the employee longevity service awards for the Mayor and Council to be awarded a flat rate, starting at \$250.00 for 10-years and increasing by \$250.00 every five years thereafter, with a maximum at 40 years.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

- C. Administrator Ritter and Council Member Chandler reported on their tour of the Advanced Biomedical Sanitations Waste Facility in Opa-locka. The staff was gracious, and the facility was clean but cramped. The owner continues to be interested in purchasing property within the City's Commerce Center to move and expand their business. **It was the consensus of the Council to authorize Administrator Ritter to negotiate the proposal for Council consideration.**

- D. **Item Added.** Motion by Council Member Chandler, second by Vice Mayor Clark, to approve spending \$170,000.00 of the American Recovery Act funds for SE 8th AVE Stormwater Phase II Drainage Project [as presented in **Exhibit 10**].

Motion Carried Unanimously.

IX. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Finalized review of documents for Bridgewater on Taylor Creek plat.
- Finalized the review of the Master Development Agreement for Park Street Commerce Center plat.
- The smoke-free parks proposed ordinance has been drafted and sent to City Staff.
- Responded to questions regarding issues with food trucks being permanent instead of mobile.
- Provided an overview of recent litigation filed related to the new Financial Disclosure Form 6 requirement.

X. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Will be meeting at Attorney Fumero's office next week to review and shore up loose ends on a few projects.
- The new lake and stormwater improvements in the City's Commerce Center are close to being completed.
- Reminded everyone the annual Battle of Okeechobee Reenactment is this weekend and a family event worth attending.

XI. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler thanked City Staff for all their hard work.

Council Member McAuley announced the next Okeechobee Utility Authority Board of Directors meeting would be City appointee, Mr. Tommy Clay's last meeting. Clerk Gamiotea interjected the Citizen Board applications are online for anyone to complete and return via email or in person. Mr. Clay's resignation would create two City vacancies on this Board. Council Member McAuley also advised everyone that proposed House Bill 57 would place term limits on County Commissioners. Once accomplished, municipal officials would be next.

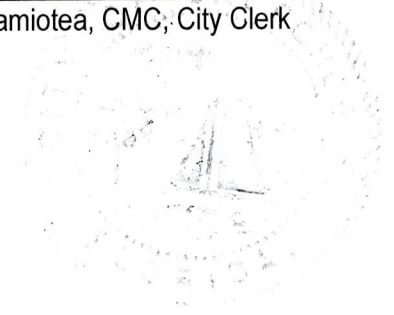
XII. ADJOURNMENT

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.