



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
JULY 21, 2020, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SUMMARY OF COUNCIL ACTION**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on Tuesday, July 21, 2020, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. Pursuant to Executive Order No. 20-69 issued by Governor DeSantis on March 20, 2020, and extended by Executive Order No. 20-150 effective June 23, 2020, the meeting was conducted utilizing communications media technology (CMT) as provided by Florida Statutes 120.54(5)(b)2, by means of Zoom.com Meeting ID 2459713294. The Host computer was operated by Executive Assistant Brock. The video and audio files were retained as a permanent record. The invocation was offered by former City Council Member Noel Chandler, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Abney.

II. ATTENDANCE

Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Council Members Wes Abney, Monica Clark, Bob Jarriel, and Bobby Keefe were present in the Chambers.

CITY STAFF: City Clerk Lane Gamiotea, City Attorney John Fumero, City Administrator Marcos MontesDeOca, Police Chief Bob Peterson, Fire Chief Herb Smith, Public Works Director David Allen, Administrative Secretary Jacob Smith, Finance Director India Riedel, and Executive Assistant Robin Brock were present in the Chambers.

III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Mayor Watford asked whether there were any agenda items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn. New Business Item H, Exhibit 8 was added by Staff.

B. Council Member Abney moved to approve the agenda as amended; seconded by Council Member Jarriel.

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

C. There were no agenda item forms or comment cards submitted for public participation for any issues not on the agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Council Member Clark to approve consent agenda items **A through B** [minutes for the June 25, 2020, Joint Workshop and July 7, 2020, Regular meeting; June 2020 Warrant Register in the amounts: General Fund \$513,046.08, Public Facilities Improvement Fund \$16,143.04, Capital Improvement Projects Fund \$21,257.27, and Law Enforcement Special Fund \$75.00 (the complete list is incorporated within the official minute file)]; seconded by Council Member Jarriel.

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

V. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:04 P.M.

A. A motion was made by Council Member Jarriel to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2020-07, providing for the Collection and Disposal Services of Residential Solid Waste customers, and establishing a Preliminary Rate Assessment for services (as provided in Exhibit 1); seconded by Council Member Clark.

Attorney Fumero read proposed Resolution No. 2020-07 by title only as follows: **"A PRELIMINARY RATE RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; PURSUANT TO THE SECTION 2.08, ORDINANCE NO. 784 RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF SOLID WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL SERVICES; SETTING FORTH A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SOLID WASTE SERVICES PROVIDED;"**

PUBLIC HEARING ITEM A CONTINUED: "DETERMINING THE SOLID WASTE ASSESSED COST FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR; ESTABLISHING THE ESTIMATED ASSESSMENT RATE FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR; AUTHORIZING AND SETTING A PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC CONCERNING ADOPTION OF AN ANNUAL RATE RESOLUTION; DIRECTING THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR TO UPDATE THE ASSESSMENT ROLL, AND TO PROVIDE NECESSARY NOTICE THEREOF TO AFFECTED LANDOWNERS IN THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

There were no questions or comments offered by the Council, the public, or via zoom.

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

- B. A motion was made by Council Member Clark to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2020-08 providing for the Residential Solid Waste and Collection Assessment for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21 (as provided in Exhibit 2); seconded by Council Member Keefe.**

Attorney Fumero read proposed Resolution No. 2020-08 by title only as follows: **"A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF SOLID WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL SERVICES; CONTINUING IMPOSITION OF THE SOLID WASTE COLLECTION ASSESSMENT PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED BY RESOLUTION 01-08; ADOPTING THE ANNUAL RATE RESOLUTION AS PERMITTED BY ORDINANCE 784 FOR FY 2020-21; APPROVING THE PRELIMINARY RATE RESOLUTION; AND CERTIFYING THE SOLID WASTE ASSESSMENT ROLL AS AUTHORIZED BY FLORIDA STATUTES 197.3632(4)(5) AS NECESSARY UNDER FLORIDA STATUTES 197.3632; PROVIDING FOR PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

There were no questions or comments offered by the Council, the public, or via zoom.

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:07 P.M.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. A motion was made by Council Member Keefe to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2020-09 providing for the Commercial Solid Waste and Collection Rates for FY 2020-21 (as provided in Exhibit 3); seconded by Council Member Jarriel.**

Attorney Fumero read proposed Resolution No. 2020-09 by title only as follows: **"A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; REVISING THE COMMERCIAL RATE SCHEDULE FOR SOLID WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL SERVICES WITHIN THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE FOR FY 2019-20 (duly noted and corrected to reflect 2020-21); PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

- B. Mrs. Tiffany Collins, Administrator of the Okeechobee County Florida Department of Health (DOH), addressed the Council and asked that they provide insight on ways to encourage individuals to wear masks, and increase participation in volunteer testing.**

NEW BUSINESS ITEM B CONTINUED: On July 18 she was able to procure a mobile testing unit for community voluntary testing. However, due to the lack of participation with approximately 250 tests administered, the State has moved the unit on to other communities where voluntary testing participation is higher. She also provided an update on the statistical data of cases regarding COVID-19. The Council thanked her for the update and her continued hard work.

- C. **A motion was made by Council Member Jarriel to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2020-10, creating the City Citizens Charter Review Advisory Committee (as provided in Exhibit 4); seconded by Council Member Abney.**

Attorney Fumero read proposed Resolution No. 2020-10 by title only as follows: **"A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA, ESTABLISHING CITY OF OKEECHOBEE CHARTER REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE."**

During discussion the Council amended the structure of the Committee by **adding one alternate member**, from seven regular members, who would participate in discussions and only vote when filling in for a regular member. Additionally, it was **clarified that the requirement of a member is to be a property owner**, not a business owner.

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

- D. **A motion was made by Council Member Clark to approve the maximum millage rate of 8.6018 for advertisement purposes of the 2020 Tax Notices, for budget year 2020-21 [as provided in Exhibit 5]; seconded by Council Member Keefe.**

There was a brief discussion on this item with Council Member Jarriel voicing his disapproval of advertising the millage at a higher rate than what was adopted for FY 2019-20.

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, and Keefe. Nays-Council Member Jarriel. Motion Carried.

- E. **A motion was made by Council Member Jarriel to approve the FY 2020-21 budget preparation and millage calendar setting Workshop(s) to be held August 12, 2020, at 5:00 P.M., August 18, 2020, at 5:00 P.M. (if needed), First Public Hearing September 3, 2020, at 6:00 P.M., and Final Public Hearing September 21, 2020, at 6:00 P.M., all to be held in the Council Chambers at 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida [as provided in Exhibit 6]; seconded by Council Member Keefe. There was a brief discussion on this item.**

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

- F. **A motion was made by Council Member Clark and seconded by Council Member Jarriel to reschedule the September 2020 City Council Regular meetings to coincide with the budget Hearings [rescheduling September 1 to September 3, and September 15 to September 21]. There was no discussion on this item.**

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

- G. Administrator MontesDeOca began the discussion regarding the City contracting fire services with Okeechobee County. Included in Exhibit 7 was a memorandum providing a general synopsis of the decisions made at the July 9, 2020, Okeechobee Board of County Commission meeting, and a spreadsheet with current salary, accrued leave balances and years of service for each City Fire Department employee.

NEW BUSINESS ITEM G CONTINUED: The Council was also provided a copy of email correspondences between the City and County Administrators, and a spreadsheet with Okeechobee County Fire and Rescue salary information to provide which specific employees were being considered for employment, and the rate of pay they would be offered.

The key points are now: the beginning date of the contract would be tentatively set for June 1, 2021. The offer for the first year is approximately \$697,000.00, not the assessment rate, and future year's costs are unknown. It is believed that future costs would be calculated using the Fire Assessment Rate that is to be adopted following the Fire Study and renegotiation of the Fire Union contract in October 2021. The County would need to use City Station One to operate calls for approximately two-years until a new facility could be built. The County is not willing to open the Fire Union contract in order to make any concession for City Firefighters. This means employees would be hired by the County as a new employee regardless of the number of years or rank with the City, and all hired would be required to complete a one-year probationary period. No additional stipends or steps would be given for years of service in regard to their pay step. Only employees with Paramedic Certificates would be considered regardless of proposed pay and additional education funding by the City. The employees would have options regarding their pension. The City would now be looking at six employees, instead of three, who would require salary packages as a result of the County's decision to only hire paramedics and not emergency medical technicians (EMT). Those considered for employment at the County would have a net loss in their salary due to the required one-year probationary period and the County choosing not to pay incoming City firefighter paramedics above a current County firefighter paramedic's step 3 salary, regardless of rank or experience.

After a lengthy discussion between the Council, Administrator MontesDeOca, Chief Smith and Captain Rodriguez, **Council Member Jarriel made a motion to instruct the City Attorney to obtain a final contract from the County Attorney at the next possible meeting, and provide the research requested by Council Member Abney: difference in salaries for employees being considered for employment at the County and the number of years the difference would need to be provided; potential negotiated salary costs for the six employees who would not be offered employment at the County; seconded by Council Member Keefe.**

Council Member Clark urged the Council to not continue discussions on this issue until later in 2021 to allow time to see how the County's Fire Union Contract renegotiations will impact the Fire Study and will most likely increase in the Fire Assessment, which would then increase the City's cost to pay for fire services. This would also not be during an election year, which she believes is influencing many of the decisions being made. Mayor Watford agreed.

Mr. Wes Williamson of the Economic Council addressed the Council asking them to continue moving forward with the contract as it will save the City \$600,000.00 a year.

VOTE: Ayes-Council Members Abney, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-Mayor Watford and Council Member Clark. Motion Carried.

- H. **ITEM ADDED TO AGENDA:** A memorandum outlining the request for Council authorization and a copy of the Federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) was provided in Exhibit 8.

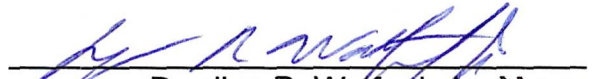
Council Member Keefe made a motion to authorize Department Heads the discretion to approve up to two weeks (80-hours) of Administrative Leave with pay for their employees following the FFCRA guidelines for first responders [authorization is from July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020]; seconded by Council Member Jarriel.

VOTE: Ayes-Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe. Nays-none. Motion Carried.

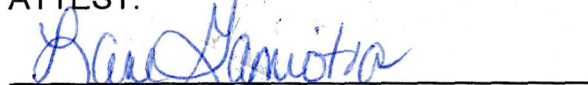
VII. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Jarriel directed his comment at the three-to-two vote previously discussed during New Business Item G. The Fire Services issue has been a topic of discussion for a prolonged period of time, and he did not want to hear negative comments from the other Council Members on social media or other media coverage, as they should be able to agree and disagree alike.

VIII. There being no further items on the agenda, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 8:16 P.M. The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 4, 2020, at 6:00 P.M.


Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:


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, he/she 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.