



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA**  
**JANUARY 24, 2022, TOWN HALL MEETING**  
**OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Watford called the Town Hall meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on Monday, January 24, 2022, at 6:00 P.M. at the Okeechobee Freshman Campus Auditorium, located at 610 Southwest 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Mr. Hoot Worley, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Watford.

Mayor Watford explained those who would like to address the Council needed to complete a comment card or a written comment form and turn them into Deputy Clerk Torres.

**II. ATTENDANCE**

Members present: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Council Members Noel A. Chandler, Monica M. Clark, Robert "Bob" Jarriel, and Robert "Bobby" M. Keefe. Staff Present: City Clerk Lane Gamiotea, City Attorney John Fumero, City Administrator Gary Ritter, Police Chief Donald Hagan, Public Works Director David Allen, Deputy City Clerk Rose Torres, Administrative Secretary Merydian Causier, General Services Coordinator Patty Burnette, Finance Director India Riedel, and Police Lieutenant Bettye Taylor.

**III. INTRODUCTION**

A presentation was made to the Citizens Charter Review Advisory Committee (CCRAC) Members who were able to be in attendance. The framed certificates of appreciation, which read, **"the City of Okeechobee Florida recognizes the valuable contributions of community involvement and hereby extends this expression of grateful appreciation,"** with their appointed terms were presented by Mayor Watford individually to Sandy Perry, Carey Pigman, Hoot Worley, Jamie Gamiotea, and Myranda Whirls.

**A. City Administrator Ritter provided an update on various activities within the City.**

- The City recently acquired the property of the Primitive Baptist Church located at 1003 Southwest 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue [legal description Lots 9 through 12 of Block 8, SOUTH OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 1, Page 12, Okeechobee County Public Records]. Grants will be applied to restore the structures. Decisions regarding what the purpose or use of property and structures will be addressed at future Council meetings.
- Many businesses are assisting the City and Okeechobee Main Street with Cattleman's Square within Flagler Park; the sculptures are anticipated to be delivered by the end of March or early April.
- A \$131,000.00 grant for South Park Street and downtown landscaping is being completed.
- Public Works staff are staying busy working on storm water projects to prepare for the rainy season. The American Recovery Act funds are being used to improve underground drainage that has collapsed and to complete the Master Storm Water Permit in the Commerce Center.
- Highlighted the sections of roadways scheduled to be repaved and that the street Stripping Plan would begin soon.
- \$500,000.00 in State Appropriation funds have been applied for City facility repairs and upgrades.

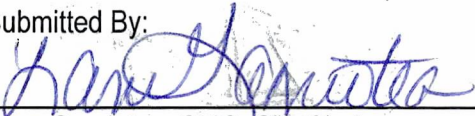
**B. City Attorney Fumero provided an update on what has transpired over the last year with meetings held by the CCRAC Members. Using the 11-slide power point [a copy has been incorporated into the official minute file], he gave a presentation on the importance and role of a municipal Charter. The mission of the CCRAC, and issues that were of concern discussed at their meetings. Reviewed the proposed Charter by Article and the specific recommended changes. The final steps are public outreach and input, City Council final approval, then schedule to be a referendum on the November 2022 General Election ballot.**

Mayor Watford offered the floor to any CCRAC Members to make comments or ask questions. Member Gamiotea asked how will the Charter be presented to the voters? Mayor Watford responded that was one of the issues the Council still has to resolve. The hope was that more citizens would have been in attendance tonight to get their feedback. Attorney Fumero explained once all issues are resolved, it would be in question form for voters to check yes or no. CCRAC Member Worley encouraged the Council to have someone monitor social media to ensure misinformation was corrected as it transpires. In response to Council Member Keefe's question where people could view the most recent version of the Charter, it was explained it is posted on the City website with their own designated page. Mayor Watford encouraged the Council to speak and address the subject at the various organizations they belong to such as the Economic Council, Kiwanis, Rotary, and their churches.

III. INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- B. Council Member Jarriel requested Clerk Gamiotea work up costs to send a copy of the Charter to all Citizen people. He was disappointed in the lack of attendance noting further it was advertised very well.
- C. Mayor Watford then asked for any comment cards or written comments, none were submitted. No one from the public had any other issues to present to the Council. He reminded everyone all Council meetings are open to the public and anyone can speak at those meetings.

IV. Mayor Watford adjourned the Town Hall meeting at 7:00 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, 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.