



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA  
FEBRUARY 15, 2022, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
OFFICIAL 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 15, 2022, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast (SE) 3rd Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Mayor Watford, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Chandler.

**II. ATTENDANCE**

Roll was taken by City Clerk Lane Gamiotea to establish a quorum. Members present: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Council Members Noel A. Chandler, Monica M. Clark, Robert "Bob" Jarriel, and Robert "Bobby" M. Keefe, Jr.

**III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- A. There were no requests for items be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.
- B. Motion by Council Member Keefe, seconded by Council Member Clark to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. No comment cards were submitted for public participation for issues not on the agenda.

**IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMTIONS**

- A. Police Officer Jeremy LaRue, accompanied by his wife, was recognized by Mayor Watford and Police Chief Donald Hagan for his years of service. He was presented with a personalized leather embossed portfolio and framed certificate, which read **"In recognition of your 10 years of service, hard work, and dedication to the City, its citizens and your fellow employees from February 10, 2012, through February 10, 2022."** Additionally, he was honored for his service as a member of the Citizen Charter Review Advisory Committee (CCRAC). Mayor Watford presented a framed Certificate of Appreciation, with his terms of service.

**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to:

- A. [Dispense with the reading and] approve the meeting Minutes for January 18, 2022 [as presented].
- B. Approve the Warrant Register for January 2022 [in the amounts of: General Fund, \$614,310.00; Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$31,550.28; and Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$101,387.90, as presented].
- C. Approve a request from Okeechobee Main Street to temporarily close Southwest (SW) 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue's between North and South Park Street's, from 5:00 P.M. on March 11, 2022, through 6:00 P.M. on March 13, 2022, for the Annual Speckled Perch Festival [as presented in Exhibit 1].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:09 P.M.**

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Jarriel to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1248, regarding Application No. 22-001-SSA, reclassify Blocks 110 and 121, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County public records, 3.9+/- acres from Commercial (C) to Multi-Family Residential (MFR) on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use (FLU) Map, submitted by property owner F. Mitch Stephens/Glenwood Park, LLC, located between Northeast (NE) 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue's and NE 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Street's [as presented in Exhibit 2]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney John Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1248 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, ORDINANCE NO. 635 AS AMENDED, BY REVISING THE FLU MAP ON A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN FROM C TO MFR, APPLICATION NO. 22-001-SSA; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION OF ORDINANCE AND REVISED FLU MAP IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1248.

City Planner, Mr. Jim LaRue presented the Planning Staff Report findings (included within Exhibit 2), and the Planning Board's recommendation for approval.

Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment. Mr. Steve Dobbs of 209 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Mr. Frank Irby of 1385 SE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, and Okeechobee Economic Development Corporation Business Manager Kaylie King of 2229 Northwest 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, addressed the Council in support of adopting the ordinance and responded to various questions from the Council.



## VI. PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- A. Continued. Pastor Chad Keathley submitted a written comment to be read into the record. Mayor Watford read the following "I am the present pastor of the Okeechobee Church of God located at 301 NE 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I would like to express my support for the proposed building plan on the adjacent property of our church. I have spoken to Mr. Stephens and have shared details of the proposed project with our governing board of elders. While we are very understanding of possible concerns from nearby residents, we welcome the opportunity to have additional families within walking distance of our property. Rental options are very limited in Okeechobee, and we have experienced that firsthand from new attendees and new staff who are still searching for permanent living accommodations. The plan that Mr. Stephens has shared with me seems to be something that will be very beneficial to our church and our community."

Mr. Stephens of 17705 Middlebrook Way, Boca Raton, disbursed a revised potential site plan and responded to various questions from the Council. **Motion Carried Four to One.**

## MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:54 P.M.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1249, regarding Petition No. 22-001-R, rezoning Blocks 110 and 121, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County public records, 3.9+/- acres from Heavy Commercial (CHV) to Residential Multiple Family (RMF), submitted by property owner F. Mitch Stephens/Glenwood Park, LLC, located between NE 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue's and NE 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Street's, for the proposed use of a multi-family structure [as presented in Exhibit 3]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1249 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING CERTAIN TRACTS OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM CHV TO RMF, PETITION NO. 22-001-R; AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1249 and set March 15, 2022, as the Final Public Hearing. Following Planner LaRue's review of the Planning Staff Report, Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment. It was noted for the record that Pastor Keathly's written comments as provided in the previous item were restated for this ordinance. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1250, updating the Capital Improvements Five Year Schedule within the Comprehensive Plan [as presented in Exhibit 4]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1250 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; UPDATING THE FIVE-YEAR SCHEDULE OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS OF THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS MANDATED BY FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 163.3177(3)(b); PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Clark, and Jarriel to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1250 and set March 15, 2022, as the Final Public Hearing. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- C. Administrator Ritter provided an update on the services provided by the City's Landscape Architect, Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc. regarding the schedule for the remaining deliverables for The Flagler Park Master Plan. The City received the property surveys, a comprehensive tree assessment and survey, and the topography surveys. On February 21<sup>st</sup>, the architect will meet with City Staff and Okeechobee Main Street representatives to coordinate and clarify designs for the remainder of the Master Plan. The schedule of items that will be due to the City is as follows: March 25<sup>th</sup>, revisions for Park 7, Butterfly Square; March 31<sup>st</sup>, Conceptual Planting Plan for the curb extension along the South side of South Park Street from SW 6<sup>th</sup> to SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue's; April 29<sup>th</sup>, Park 5, Settlers Square; May 27<sup>th</sup>, Park 4, Seminole Square; June 24<sup>th</sup>, Park 3, Speckled Perch Square; July 29<sup>th</sup>, Park 2, Veteran's Memorial Square; August 26<sup>th</sup>, Park 1, City Hall Plaza. That will bring them to the end of their contract. No official action was required.
- D. Following discussion, a Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Jarriel to postpone to the March 1, 2022, meeting the request to approve a recommendation from the Technical Review Committee to deviate from the standards listed in Section 78-36 of the City's Land Development Regulations regarding the requirements for installation of sidewalks pertaining to the Budget Home, LLC, triplex project located at NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street [as presented in Exhibit 5]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**



**VII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED**

- E. Mayor Watford yielded the floor to Ms. Magi Cable of the Okeechobee Historical Society to present potential uses of Primitive Baptist Church property [located at 1003 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, legal: Lots 9 through 12 of Block 8, SOUTH OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 1, Page 12, Okeechobee County public records]. The Historical Society would like to partner with the City to utilize at least one of the two buildings as a museum to feature Mr. Gordie Peer, Mr. Pete Clemons, and other local family's historical artifacts as well as feature historical information about the churches in Okeechobee. A copy of a power point that provided local church establishments, including the Primitive Baptist Church in 1919, and current photographs of the property and inside the buildings, is incorporated within the official minute file. The Council thanked Ms. Cable for her presentation. No official action was taken at this time.
- F. Police Chief Hagan and Finance Director India Riedel provided for informational purposes recent developments related to the Florida Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System. After the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, the state-wide system was mandated for all agencies and hospitals to participate in by 2008. At that time, there were grants/state appropriations to assist with the initial purchases. The new system will be required to be implemented as of 2023. To date, there are no grants/state appropriations available for the City to apply to cover or off-set the costs for a new console and radios. However, they are hopeful this will change. Senator Ben Albritton of District 26 has recently been a champion on this issue and understands the financial hardship these costs will have on rural agencies. There are many things going on behind the scenes and equipment available to purchase now, which are not budgeted items. Staff will continue to monitor the situation and weigh options on equipment purchases; this issue will be a costly item in the upcoming Fiscal Year budget.

**VIII. CITY ATTORNEY**

- Working on the draft ordinance to adopt the Charter, will send the template to be reviewed soon.
- There are several preemption bills moving through the current Legislative process that are troubling, he will continue to monitor them closely.
- Continues to draft a quasi-judicial ordinance to adopt a policy for land use and rezoning issues. The City currently has a Resolution that needs to modernize the procedures.

**IX. ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

- Working with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council to assist/moderate the Council-Planning Board Joint Workshop to review the FLU and Zoning Maps inconsistencies and the best methods to address the properties.
- The two companies who submitted to the Planning Services Request For Qualifications will be making presentations to the Council at the March 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. From there, a contract will need to be negotiated for Council approval.
- As part of the public outreach recommended by the CCRAC regarding the proposed Charter, he will be highlighting the proposed changes on the local radio station, WOKC, once a month starting in March to provide information.
- Chief Smith has sold another fire truck and 4 pallets of equipment on gov deals.
- The City's two appropriation bills are still in place at this time.

**X. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member Chandler:

- Suggested that instead of replacing the two large oak trees located on the front lawn of City Hall that were recently removed, to install different landscaping closer to the building. With the trees gone, you can now see the actual architecture of the building.

Council Member Jarriel:

- Asked that monthly Department Head reports begin again.
- Suggested that the Mayor and Council ride on the vintage fire truck in the next parade.

Council Member Keefe:

- Inquired to when the Council-Planning Board Joint Workshop would be held. No date has been set to allow for the City to enter into a contract for Planning Services.
- Agreed with Council Member Chandler's idea.

**XI. ADJOURN;** Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 8:02 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.