



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
APRIL 19, 2022, 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 April 19, 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 Pastor Don Hanna of the First United Methodist Church; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Jarriel.

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A. Mayor Watford asked whether there were any agenda items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn. Items "B" and "E" under Presentations and Proclamations were deferred to the May 3rd meeting and Item "E," Exhibit 6 under New Business was added.

B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to approve the agenda as amended. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

C. A comment card for public participation for issues not on the agenda was submitted by Mr. Russ Brown, Indian River State College (IRSC) Dixon Hendry Campus Provost. He provided information and flyers on the IRSC Promise Program sponsored by the IRSC Foundation, Inc. The program provides for free tuition for an associate degree to any 2022 high school graduate from a public or public charter high school from Martin, Indian River, Okeechobee, or Saint Lucie Counties. The information will be shared on the City's social media, website, and with the employees.

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

A. Mayor Watford presented Mr. Jim LaRue with a framed Certificate of Appreciation, that was read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, on January 9, 1996, the City of Okeechobee entered into a contract to provide building and zoning professional services with H.L. Bennett, Inc., who sub-contracted the planning services portion to LaRue Planning and Management Services, Inc. Mr. Jim LaRue attended his first Planning Board and City Council Meetings on August 20, 1996. He provided these services under the sub-contract until February 2, 1999, when the City entered into the first contract directly with Mr. LaRue. It was during these initial years that Jim worked together with City Clerk Bonnie Thomas (retired), City Attorney John R. Cook (retired), Administrative Secretary Beatrice Castorina (retired), and then Deputy City Clerk Lane Gamiotea to create the necessary documents that provided the regulations, procedures, fee structures, and forms that set the foundation for the City to provide planning and zoning services to its citizens in-house; and Whereas, during the almost 26 years, LaRue Planning and Management Services, processed approximately three Evaluation and Appraisal Reports; 45 Variance Petitions; 109 Site Plan Reviews; 132 Special Exception Petitions; 21 Resolutions and 375 Ordinances that addressed Comprehensive Plan Text Amendments, Future Land Use Map Amendments, Rezoning Petitions, Land Development Regulation Amendments, and Right-of-Way Petitions; and Whereas, Jim and his firm have proven to be dedicated to our community, going above and beyond to provide assistance to residents and applicants alike. They will be fondly remembered as the City's Planner who created the "Perfect Sign Ordinance" adopted by the City Council. Now, therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, Florida, proudly extend our sincerest appreciation to Jim LaRue for his unwavering devotion to proper growth management, his service to the people of Okeechobee, and his friendship extended to City Staff. We are a better community by his guidance."**

B. The presentation honoring the members of the Okeechobee High School Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corp was deferred to the May 3, 2022, meeting.

C. Mayor Watford presented Miss. Carol Marker, who was accompanied by her family, with a framed Certificate of Outstanding Achievement, that was read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, the City deems it befitting to honor the youth of our community who inspire others. Your hometown is proud to recognize your Achievements in the sport of Tennis."**

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS CONTINUED

- C. Continued: Carol found her inner strength, with all the odds stacked against her to try-out for and made the Okeechobee High School Tennis Team. She will graduate in May of this year as a 2-year Letterman; and Whereas, Carol is not only a member of Brahman Tennis Team, but she is also a member of the Okeechobee Special Olympics Tennis Team, winning Silver in the State's 2021 Competition, then recently winning the Area 8 Championship and will again represent Okeechobee in the State's 2022 Competition. Now, therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, hereby extends this honor to Carol, during Autism Awareness Month for her determination, charisma, and integrity, both on and off the court."
- D. Mayor Watford proclaimed April 18th through 24th as Crime Victims' Rights Week and read into the record the following: "Whereas, being a victim of crime and navigating the criminal justice system can be a frightening and confusing experience; and Whereas, progress in improving the treatment of crime victims has been made through the efforts of thousands of victims and survivors who have turned their own experiences into a force for positive change, ensuring that others can receive justice, meaningful assistance, and compassionate treatment before the law; and Whereas, since the passage of the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, and through the dedicated work of advocates, lawmakers, and victim service providers, there is a growing array of services and resources available to victims and their loved ones; and Whereas, honoring the rights of victims, including the rights to be heard and to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect, and working to meet their needs rebuilds their trust in the criminal justice and social service systems; and Whereas, individuals' trust in the compassion, understanding, and support of their communities is achieved through sustained, deep-rooted, and coordinated outreach; and Whereas, identifying, reaching, and serving all victims of crime, especially those from groups that often have less access to healing services and avenues to justice, is essential; and Whereas, our community's continued engagement with the challenges faced by victims of crime will ensure that the progress made to date is not lost, and that new ground is broken to gain greater justice and healing for all victims; and Whereas, National Crime Victims' Rights Week provides an opportunity to recommit to ensuring that accessible, appropriate, and trauma-informed services are offered to all victims of crime; and Whereas, National Crime Victims' Rights Week provides an opportunity to recommit ensuring that all victims of crime, especially those who are challenging to reach or serve, are offered culturally and linguistically accessible and appropriate services in the aftermath of crime; and Whereas, the City of Okeechobee is hereby dedicated to supporting victims and survivors in the aftermath of crime, building trust among our clients, collaborating with other service providers, and engaging our community in response efforts. Now, therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, Florida, do hereby proclaim April 18 through 24, 2022 as Crime Victims' Rights Week." Okeechobee County Sheriff Noel Stephen and Victims Advocate, Mrs. Joan Johnson, Martha's House Executive Director, Mr. Jonathan Bean, and 19th Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office Victims Advocate, Mrs. Marie Figueroa gratefully accepted the proclamation.
- E. Proclaiming May 1 through 7, 2022, as Municipal Clerks' Week was deferred to the May 3, 2022, meeting.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to:

- A. [Dispense with the reading and] approve the meeting Minutes for April 5, 2022 [as presented].
- B. Approve the Warrant Register for March 2022 [in the amounts: General Fund \$540,204.06; Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$19,943.85; and Capital Improvement Projects Fund \$2,469.41 as presented].

Motion Carried Unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. The motion and second by Council Members Clark and Keefe to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2022-03, Fund Balance and Reserve Policy was postponed from the April 5, 2022, meeting. This allowed additional time for the Council to review the proposed policy and Staff to make the suggested changes. The modified language was noted in the revised resolution, as presented in Exhibit 1. Administrator Gary Ritter deferred to Finance Director India Riedel to present the five-slide presentation, which has been incorporated into the official minute file. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to approve the request from Okeechobee Main Street to design and hang [South] Park Street Lamp Post Banners during the months of May and extended through July 2022 to commemorate the Cattle Drive Sculpture Project [as presented in Exhibit 2]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to approve an agreement with Culpepper & Terpening, Inc., in the amount of \$52,710.00, for survey and design engineering for the Southwest 5th Avenue Resurfacing Project funded by the Florida Department of Transportation Small Counties Outreach Program [as presented in Exhibit 3]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to approve an agreement with Kimley Horn for professional services in the amount of \$18,600.00, for the [Okeechobee Taylor Creek] SE 4th Street Stormwater Improvement Project, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) [Grant] Agreement No. LPQ0007 [as presented in Exhibit 4]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- D. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1253, regarding a referendum on the November 8, 2022, General Election Ballot adopting a new City Charter [as presented in Revised Exhibit 5]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney John Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1253 by title only as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO THE CITY CHARTER; PROVIDING FINDINGS OF CITY COUNCIL REGARDING THE CURRENT CHARTER AND A PROPOSED REVISED CHARTER; CALLING FOR A REFERENDUM FOR ELECTORS OF THE CITY TO VOTE ON WHETHER TO APPROVE REVISIONS TO THE CITY CHARTER; AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE FILING AND PUBLICATION OF THE NEW CITY CHARTER; DECLARING THE LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR ENACTMENT OF THE ORDINANCE; PROVIDING THE BALLOT TITLE AND BALLOT SUMMARY FOR THE REFERENDUM; PROVIDING FOR OTHER RELATED MATTERS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR EFFECTIVE DATES.”**

Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Chandler to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1253 and set May 17, 2022, as the final hearing date. Following discussion, **a motion and second were made by Council Members Clark and Jarriel to amend proposed Ordinance No. 1253 to change the City Clerk position from elected to appointed. Motion to Amend Carried Four To One. Motion As Amended Carried Unanimously.**

- E. ITEM ADDED TO THE AGENDA: Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to approve Amendment No. 2 to the FDEP Grant [Agreement] No. LPQ0007 [for the Okeechobee Taylor Creek SE 4th Street Stormwater Project], extending the Task 1 Construction end date one year to December 30, 2023, and extending the Agreement end date to June 30, 2024 [as presented in Exhibit 6]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.** Mrs. Connie Vanassche, of CAS Governmental Services, LLC, City Lobbyist, provided an update on the recent Legislative Session and announced Governor DeSantis called a Special Session that conveyed today. A second Special Session is anticipated to be called in May.

VIII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Worked with City Staff to create the newly adopted Reserve Policy.
- Working with City Staff on a Workers Compensation claim.
- Responded to questions from Council Member Jarriel related to conditional zoning regulations.
- Working with City Staff on amendments to the Home-Based Business regulations.
- The Holding category zoning ordinance is being looked at again.

IX. ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- New City Planning Consultant, Morris Depew Associates, Inc., contract to be presented at the next meeting.
- Public Works employees have completed the construction of the temporary swales [between the southern and eastern perimeter portions] of the River Run Mobile Home Resort subdivision. Once the contractors for Racetrack have the [sound buffering] wall completed, Public Works employees will go back and grade the area. The Okeechobee Utility Authority lift station access in this same area, is a work in progress.
- May 24, 2022, 6:00 p.m. Joint Council and Planning Board Workshop with Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) representatives moderating.
- Notified by a CFRPC representative that they applied for a Parking Study Grant on the City's behalf.
- Commended Public Works employees for the exterior improvements made to date at their facility [located at 500 Northwest 11th Avenue].

X. CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Council Member Jarriel noted this was Deputy City Clerk Rose Torres' last meeting and that he enjoyed working with her.

XI. ADJOURN, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:25 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.