



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA**  
**JUNE 7, 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 June 7, 2022, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3<sup>rd</sup> 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, Robert "Bob" Jarriel, and Robert "Bobby" M. Keefe, Jr. Council Member Monica M. Clark attended electronically via Zoom.

**III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- A. Mayor Watford asked whether there were any items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn. New Business, Item I, Exhibit 11, was added.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to approve the agenda as amended. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. No comment cards were submitted for public participation for issues not on the agenda.

**IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS**

- A. Mr. Joe Papasso was recognized by Mayor Watford for his years of volunteerism. He was presented with a framed Certificate of Appreciation, read into the record as follows: **"The City of Okeechobee, Florida recognizes the Valuable Contribution of community involvement and hereby extends this expression of grateful appreciation to Joe Papasso for faithful service as a dedicated member appointed to the City of Okeechobee Planning Board, Board of Adjustment, and Design Review Board, May 20, 2020 through April 29, 2022."**
- B. Mr. John "J.P." Zeigler, accompanied by his wife, was recognized by Mayor Watford for his volunteerism. He was presented with a framed Certificate of Appreciation, read into the record as follows: **"The City of Okeechobee, Florida recognizes the Valuable Contribution of community involvement and hereby extends this expression of grateful appreciation to John Ziegler for faithful service as a dedicated member appointed to the City of Okeechobee General Employees' Pension Board of Trustees, March 1, 2021 through April 28, 2022."**
- C. Mayor Watford proclaimed May 9 through 13, 2022, as "Economic Development Week." The document will be mailed to Mrs. Kaylee King and read as follows: "Whereas, the International Economic Development Council is recognizing 2022 as its 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The International Economic Development Council is the largest professional economic development organization dedicated to serving economic developers; and Whereas, the International Economic Development Council provides leadership and excellence in economic development for communities, members, and partners through conferences, training courses, advisory services and research, in-depth publications, public policy advocacy, and initiatives such as the Accredited Economic Development Organization program, the Certified Economic Developer designation, and the Entrepreneurship Development Professional; and Whereas, the Okeechobee County Economic Development Corporation as a current member of the International Economic Development Council, promotes economic well-being and quality of life for our community by creating, retaining, and expanding jobs that facilitate growth, enhance wealth, and provide a stable tax base; and Whereas, local economic development is engaged in a wide variety of settings including urban and local, state, county, and federal governments, public-private partnerships, chambers of commerce, universities, and variety of other institutions; and Whereas, the Okeechobee County Economic Development Corporation attracts and retains businesses, partners with local stakeholders to develop vibrant community, boosts tourism, and improves the services and quality of life in our County and our City. 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 the week of May 8 through 13, 2022 of 'Economic Development Week' in the City of Okeechobee."



V. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to [dispense with the reading and] approve the May 17, 2022, Minutes [as presented in **Exhibit 1**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. **MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:10 P.M.**

- A. City Attorney Greg Hyden 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.”**
- B. Continued discussion [from May 17, 2022] on the Motion on the floor made by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1253 [as presented in **Exhibit 2**].

Mayor Watford opened the floor for discussion by the public. Mr. David McAuley requested clarification that the Council had come up with a way to separate the amendment into two different questions. Mayor Watford responded yes and clarified that is not how it is proposed in the current language. Mr. Billy McCullers stated his disappointment that no consideration has been made to separate the referendum into two questions.

An email from Donna Howard was read into the record by Mayor Watford as follows **“Esteemed Mayor and City Council Members of Okeechobee, I would like to address the office of the Okeechobee City Clerk, which is scheduled to be discussed on tonight’s agenda. The right to vote is at the core of our American democracy. When you take away our right to vote on any matter, you essentially take away our voice, our autonomy and ultimately our power. I am aware that a financial case can be made for changing the City Clerk’s position from elected to appointed. However, I am also aware that an appointed official would only need to satisfy a select few, whereas an elected official would need to continue to satisfy the entire City of Okeechobee in order to stay in office. It’s also worth mentioning that we, the City of Okeechobee, have elected each of you to serve on our council and I don’t think any of you would be happy if your positions were up for debate. Please make a clarification separating the Okeechobee City Clerk issue from the rest of the Charter changes. Your time and attention to this matter is greatly appreciated. P.S. I cannot attend tonight’s meeting in person, so please make sure that my comments are read aloud at tonight’s meeting.”**

An email from Jodi Hazellief was read into the record by Mayor Watford as follows **“To Mayor Watford and City Council Members, I am writing to you today to voice my opinion on the proposition of the New Charter. While I have read over the Charter and the changes you want to make, I am a little confused as to why you would add the change of the City Clerk position to be appointed from elected to this ordinance. It seems that maybe as an afterthought it was just added in the end. I believe this should be a separate question altogether as it has no relevance to the other items being presented. I would hate to think that this was done maliciously, with the hope that the voters would pass the entire Charter when voting, without reading it in its entirety. We all know, unfortunately, that voters do not like to read things all the way through when they are voting. If they read a little into it and it sounds good or beneficial then a yes vote it is. Too much legislation in the USA gets passed this way, with hidden agendas, and it is wrong. As far as the position of City Clerk being appointed and not elected doesn’t sit well with me either. People who are appointed tend to be in someone’s pocket or have theirs or someone else’s best interest in mind, not the public they are serving. Okeechobee’s own Bill of Rights states-In order to provide the public with full and accurate information, to promote efficient governance, to ensure accountability and to provide all persons fair and equitable treatment. How are all of these things going to happen when the person is appointed and not elected? Where is the accountability going to come from? Is this appointed person just going to become a scapegoat for any wrongdoings that are found out? Keep this position as an elected one, separate it from the charter, and give the voters a chance to really see what you are proposing. Thank you for your time and consideration.”**

A letter from Jennifer Tewksbury, Executive Director of the Economic Council, was read into the record by Mayor Watford as follows **“Good evening Mayor Watford and Honorable Members of the City Council, the Economic Council has supported your initiative to update our City’s Charter since the discussions first began, and with the belief that the best interest of the City will be served**



## VI. PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- B. Continued: thereby, we support advertising the Charter revisions with the same language currently in your agenda as a single ballot item (Exhibit 2). I regret I am unable to attend in person this evening but want to be sure that the community support for your previous action on this item is known, recognized, and documented for the record as you continue your efforts to improve our City and modernize the Charter. Thank You for your continued service to our community."

Council Member Chandler made a motion to amend proposed Ordinance No. 1253 to separate the issue of the position of City Clerk changing to an appointed position from the other items listed in the charter. Motion to amend failed due to the lack of a second.

Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Jarriel to amend proposed Ordinance No. 1253 to correct errors in Article 5 paragraphs b, d, and g removing any reference that the City Clerk position is elected; and in the first "Whereas" paragraph, correct to read appointed residents, not City residents. **Motion to Amend Carried Unanimously. Vote on Motion as Amended Carried three to two, Mayor Watford and Council Member Chandler voting no.**

**MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:33 P.M.**

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to review and approve the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21 Audited Financials prepared by Carr, Riggs and Ingram [as presented in **Exhibit 3**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Keefe to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1254 regarding Land Development Regulation (LDR) Text Amendment Application No. 22-001-TA for home-based businesses [as presented in **Exhibit 4**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Hyden read proposed Ordinance No. 1254 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING SECTION 90-633, HOME OCCUPATION WITHIN CHAPTER 90, LDR'S OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1254 and set July 5, 2022, as the final hearing date. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- C. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1258, extending the sunset date one year for Ordinance No. 1224, adopting the Holding Property Rezoning Program [as presented in **Exhibit 5**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Hyden read proposed Ordinance No. 1258 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; EXTENDING THE HOLDING REZONING PROGRAM CREATED BY ORDINANCE 1224; PROVIDING FOR A ONE (1) YEAR SUNSET CLAUSE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1258 and set July 5, 2022, as the final hearing date. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- D. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$9,379.62, not to exceed \$10,000.00, to rewire the Council Chambers [as presented in **Exhibit 6**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- E. Discussed local and state regulations for the use of fireworks. Per the discussion and, at the recommendation of Attorney Hyden, Mayor Watford stated that it was **the consensus of the Council that the Code of Ordinances be amended with Police Staff input.**
- F. Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Keefe to approve a Facility Use License Agreement with the Okeechobee Historical Society, Inc., regarding use of the Primitive Baptist Church property [as presented in **Exhibit 8**, located at 1003 Southwest (SW) 3rd Avenue, Legal Description: Lots 9 through 12 of Block 8, SOUTH OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 1, Page 12 and Plat Book 5, Page 7, Okeechobee County Public Records]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

## VII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- G. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Keefe to approve a Contractor's Agreement with RMPK Funding, Inc. for grant consulting services [as presented in **Exhibit 9**, piggyback from the City of Oakland Park, RFP No. 030971, for a term of one year with two renewable years]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- H. Staff presented a recommendation to convert the City parcel at SW 3rd Avenue and 23rd Street from a storage area to an open public green space, or sell the parcel [as presented in **Exhibit 10**]. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to sell the parcel [Lots 6 and 7 of Block 5, ROYAL OAKS ADDITION, Plat Book 1, Page 8, Okeechobee County Public Records] and earmark the money to be used for the Primitive Baptist Church project [structures on property listed in New Business, Item F]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- I. **Added Agenda Item:** Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to approve the purchase of two administrative Chevrolet Traverse vehicles under Florida State contract pricing in the amount of \$29, 652.00 each [as presented in **Exhibit 11**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

## VIII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Nothing at this time.

## IX. ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Legislative Update: Senate Bill 620 is still pending, and the proposed budget is not signed yet;
- Cattlemen's Square Ribbon Cutting Ceremony is set for July 23, 2022.

## X. CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler: Pavement is buckling on SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

Council Member Jarriel: Chief Hagan does a radio show on the first Thursday of the month and has already laid the fireworks' groundwork last week.

The City Council extended a warm welcome to Mrs. Heather Prince, hired by Clerk Gamiotea on June 6, 2022, as the Deputy City Clerk.

## XI. ADJOURN, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:30 P.M.

Submitted By:



Lane Gamiotea, CMO, 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.