



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
SEPTEMBER 6, 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 September 6, 2022, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Mayor Watford; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Clark.

II. ATTENDANCE

Roll was taken by City Clerk 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- A. There were no requests for items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to approve the agenda as published. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. There were no comment cards submitted for public participation for issues not on the agenda.

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

- A. Mayor Watford proclaimed September 2022 as "Suicide Prevention Awareness Month." He presented two Proclamations to two separate organizations.

The first being presented to Ms. Yolanda Gomez, Office Manager; Mr. Wes Sammons, Program Manager; and Mrs. Maria Romo, Supervisor of Targeted Case Management, of Suncoast Mental Health Center and was read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, which directs the community's attention to this public health epidemic destroying lives, whole families, and sometimes entire communities; and Whereas, suicide rates on the Treasure Coast and in Okeechobee were increasing in the first half of 2022 according to our Medical Examiner's Office with four suicide deaths in Okeechobee County in quarter one of 2022; and Whereas, suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States with an average 130 suicides each day; and Whereas, in 2020, there were an estimated 1.20 million suicide attempts; and Whereas, in 2020, the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population of Suicide Deaths (All) in Okeechobee County was 15.2 compared to Florida at 13.1; and Whereas, in Okeechobee County there were nine suicide deaths in 2021, a 23.90 percent year over year increase from 2020; and Whereas, suicide is the only type of death that is 100 percent preventable; and by offering public education, data, support, and services we as a community have taken a step toward preventing another suicide by our residents those resilient people with the capacity to recover, rebound, and heal. 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 month of September 2022 as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month."**

The second being presented to Ms. Jessica Olney, Prevention Specialist of Our Village Okeechobee, and was read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, the month of September is National Suicide Prevention month, a time in which individuals, organizations, and communities around the country join their voices to amplify the message that suicide can be prevented; and Whereas, Suicide affects individuals, families, and communities across Okeechobee County, Florida, and the nation; and Whereas, Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 34, the fourth leading cause among people ages 34 to 54, and the fifth leading cause among people ages 45 to 54; and Whereas, Okeechobee County is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, through education, advocacy, and resources for those who have lost someone to suicide or who are contemplating suicide themselves; and Whereas, we recognize suicide as a preventable national and state public health problem and declare suicide prevention to be a priority and support culturally-informed and evidence-based mental health care and services; and Whereas, we promote awareness that there is no single cause for suicide, and that suicide most often occurs when stressors exceed the coping abilities of someone struggling with a mental health condition; and Whereas, Okeechobee County, recognizes the impact of awareness and education, access to services, acceptance of the importance of mental health and well-being to a person's overall success, and supports the implementation of trauma informed approaches throughout the systems of care. 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 month of September 2022 as Suicide Awareness Month."**

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS CONTINUED

- B. Mayor Watford proclaimed October 8, 2022 as “Peter Raulerson Day.” The Proclamation was presented to Mrs. Magi Cable, of the Okeechobee Historical Society, and read into the record as follows: “Whereas, October 8, 2022, marks the seventy fifth anniversary of the passing of our founding father, Peter Raulerson, and by request of the Okeechobee Historical Society; and Whereas, it is fitting and proper to accord official recognition to this memorable anniversary; and Whereas, at the time of his passing at 90 years old, he had made remarkable contributions to this community. Moving here with his family as the first white settlers in 1896, he went on to live a life of public service. He was the first postmaster of Tantie, the first mayor once the City of Okeechobee was formed in 1915, and a County Commissioner for St. Lucie County before the County was formed. He organized the first school and established the Primitive Baptist Church. In the year 2000, he was recognized by the City of Okeechobee as a ‘Great Floridian.’ 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 October 8, 2022, as Peter Raulerson Day.”
- C. Mayor Watford proclaimed September 17 through 23, 2022 as “Constitution Week.” The Proclamation was presented to Mrs. Magi Cable and Mrs. Lonnie Kirsch, Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and was read into the record as follows: “Whereas, September 17, 2022 marks the two hundred and thirty-fifth anniversary of the drafting of the Constitution of the United States of America by the Constitutional Convention; and Whereas, by request of the Okeechobee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, it is fitting and proper to accord official recognition to this magnificent document and its memorable anniversary and to the patriotic celebrations which will commemorate the occasion; and Whereas, Public Law 915 guarantees the issuing of a proclamation each year by the President of the United States of America designating September 17 through 23 as Constitution Week. 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 September 17-23, 2022 as Constitution Week.”
- D. Public Works Director, Mr. David Allen, was recognized by Mayor Watford and Administrator Ritter for his years of service. He was presented with a leather embossed portfolio, personalized with his name, and a framed Longevity Service Certificate, read into the record as follows: “In recognition of your 10 years of service, hard work, and dedication to the City, its citizens, and your fellow employees from September 11, 2012 through September 11, 2022.”

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to:
- A. Ratify the appointment of Mrs. Dawn Martin to the General Employees’ Pension Fund Board of Trustees as the Fifth Member, replacing Mr. J.P. Ziegler; and
 - B. Approve a purchase in the amount of \$19,600.00 to Glasgow Equipment Services, Inc for the replacement of the diesel fuel pump at Public Works [as presented in **Exhibit 1**].
- Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:28 P.M.

- The following items are quasi-judicial in nature. In accordance with section 286.0115, Florida statutes, an opportunity for persons to speak on each item will be made available after the applicant and staff have made their presentations on each item. All testimony, including public testimony and evidence, may be made under oath or affirmation. Additionally, each person who gives testimony may be subject to cross-examination. If you do not wish to be either cross-examined or sworn, your testimony will be given its due weight. The general public may request the Board to ask questions of staff or witnesses on their behalf. Any person presenting documents to the Board should provide the City Clerk with a minimum of 10 copies. Further details of the quasi-judicial procedure may be obtained from the Clerk. No verbatim record by a certified court reporter is made of these proceedings. Accordingly, any person who may seek to appeal any decision involving the matters noticed herein will be responsible for making a verbatim record of the testimony and evidence at these proceedings upon which any appeal is to be based (see Section 286.0105, Fla. Stat.). In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 286.26, F.S., persons needing a special accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact the City Clerk’s office at 863-763-9814 seventy-two (72) hours in advance of this proceeding.
- A. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1261 regarding Rezoning Petition No. 22-005-R, submitted by property owner James Caprio/608 Okeechobee LLC, to rezone 0.64+/- acres, Lots 7 and 8 from Commercial Professional Office (CPO) and Lots 9 and 10 from Residential Single Family-One (RSF-1) to Light Commercial (CLT) of Block 78, OKEECHOBEE. The property is located at 201 through 205 Northeast (NE) 6th Street. The proposed use is to expand the existing business located directly North of this property [as presented in **Exhibit 2**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- A. Continued. City Attorney John Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1261 as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM CPO AND RSF-1 TO CLT, PETITION NO. 22-005-R; AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1261. Attorney Fumero administered an oath to City Planner Ben Smith and Mr. Steve Dobbs of 209 NE 2nd Street, who was representing the property owner and expressed his support for approval. Planner Smith presented the Planning Staff Report findings and Planning Board's recommendation of approval. Clerk Gamiotea noted for the record that 20 courtesy notices were mailed to surrounding property owners, with one returned undeliverable, advertisements and four signs were properly posted, with no objections or comments received to date. Mayor Watford confirmed with Planner Smith that buffering for the specific proposed use, would be required at least on the Eastside of the property, due to the proximity of residential homes. Mr. Caprio has submitted Petition No. 22-002-SE, it is scheduled to be heard by the Board of Adjustment on September 15, 2022. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:36 P.M.

VII. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:36 P.M.

Mayor Watford announced that the purpose of this public hearing is to consider the first reading of ordinances for the proposed Millage Rate levy and proposed Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23. He announced the proposed Millage Rate levy represents zero percent more than the roll-back rate computed pursuant to Florida Statutes 200.065(1).

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1266, levying a Millage Rate of 6.8987 on all real and tangible personal property for proposed FY October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023 [as presented in **Exhibit 3**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1266 as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; LEVYING THE AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAX MILLAGE RATE FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES ON ALL TAXABLE PROPERTY WITHIN THE CITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF STATE LAW FOR THE FY BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2022 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2023; PROVIDING THAT 6.8987 PER THOUSAND DOLLAR VALUATION SHALL NOT BE LEVIED ON HOMESTEAD PROPERTY; THAT 6.8987 VALUATION SHALL BE USED FOR GENERAL CITY PURPOSES; THAT SAID MILLAGE RATE IS ZERO PERCENT (0.00%) MORE THAN THE ROLL-BACK RATE OF 6.8987 COMPUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLORIDA STATUTE 200.065(1); PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Keefe to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1266 and set September 26, 2022 as the final hearing date. There were no comments from the public or the Council. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1267, setting the annual Budget for FY 2022-23 [as presented in **Exhibit 4**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1267 as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING AN ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2022, AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2023; APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR OPERATING EXPENSES OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE FOR THE GENERAL OPERATION OF THE SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE CITY AND OTHER FIXED OBLIGATIONS OF THE CITY FOR AND DURING THE FISCAL YEAR; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT AND SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Keefe to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1267 and set September 26, 2022 as the final hearing date.

There were no public comments. Council Member Jarriel inquired about any amendments since August 16, 2022. Finance Director India Riedel responded there were not any adjustments noted at the last Budget Workshop.

VII. BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- B. Continued. The only difference between what is presented, from the last proposed Budget, is the \$10,000.00 for the personnel study which was moved from 512 Executive (Administration) to 2512 City Clerk's Office (Personnel Administrator) budget. There was a lengthy discussion regarding whether the revenues were projected too conservative. **The consensus was to use the revenues as presented.** However, Director Riedel will provide for informational purposes, a three-year rolling average for applicable revenues. Discussion turned to lowering the projected fuel cost to the amount used for FY 2021-22. **The consensus was to leave it as presented.** In regard to leasing, financing, or outright purchasing a new backhoe, **there was not a consensus.** Staff understands to research the options when the item is presented for actual purchase. **Motion Carried four-to-one, Council Member Jarriel voted No.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE FIRST BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AT 7:35 P.M.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Mr. Phil Menke, Project Manager for Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), reviewed the plans and anticipated timeline [as provided in **Exhibit 5**] for improvements and resurfacing to a portion of State Road 70/North Park Street, from U.S. Highway 441/Parrot Avenue to NE 17th Street. The portion within the City Limits ends at East 13th Avenue. He disclosed for the record on August 29, 2022, he met with Mayor Watford, Council Members Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe individually to discuss the project. Following the presentation, Mr. Menke responded to various questions from the Council and Staff, with several issues for FDOT to re-evaluate. This item was for informational purposes only with no official action required.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to approve a request by Okeechobee Main Street (OKMS) to install banners of local Veterans along Park Street starting November 1, 2022, as a part of the Hometown Heroes Banner Project [as presented in **Exhibit 6**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to approve a Grant Agreement for [\$200,000.00] funding with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for the [reimbursement of] Cattlemen's Square project [as presented in **Exhibit 7**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- D. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to approve a Roadway Improvements Contract with CW Roberts Contracting, Inc. in the amount of \$80,000.00 for asphalt millings and paving [for the FY 2021-22 Budgeted item as presented in **Exhibit 8**]. A corrected cover memorandum was distributed and incorporated into the official minute file. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- E. Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Chandler to approve the renewal for Property and Casualty Insurance with Public Risk Management, with an effective date of October 1, 2022, [as presented in **Exhibit 9**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- F. Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Chandler to approve the disposal of obsolete and surplus [through the GovDeals auction website] Police Department equipment and vehicles [as presented in **Exhibit 10**]. Chief Hagan conveyed a request from Martha's House, the local non-profit organization that provides shelter and other services for battered women and children, for the City to consider donating an obsolete vehicle. Martha's House employees would use it to transport clients to healthcare appointments and court appearances. A motion to amend the motion on the floor, was made by Council Member Clark, to donate Asset No. 753, Unit 114, [a 2014 Dodge Charger] to Martha's House [removing it from the auction list]; seconded by Council Member Chandler. **Motion to Amend Carried Unanimously. Motion as Amended Carried Unanimously.**

IX. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- New law allowing municipalities to impose fees on short term rentals, may need to consider an ordinance;
- Working on a Memorandum of Understanding with OKMS regarding landscaping endcaps along South Park Street.

X. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Rezoning and Small-Scale Amendments regarding City properties on the agenda for the next Planning Board meeting;
- Mr. Jim Smith is working with South Florida Water Management District to address drainage issues at Commerce Center;
- The grant for the new police radios was not awarded;
- Restoration of the Public Safety Building (former Fire Department) did not proceed to the next phase of the grant selection process.

XI. COUNCIL COMMENTS

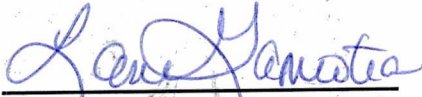
Council Member Chandler noted a property owner appears to be operating a business illegally, out of their residence. Chief Hagan responded Code Enforcement is aware and working to resolve the problem.

Council Member Jarriel expressed his concern over campaign signs being removed by Code Enforcement.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 8:32 P.M.

Submitted By:



Lane Gamiotea
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.