



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
OCTOBER 18, 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 October 18, 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 Pastor Lindell Selvey, Retired of Okeechobee Missionary Baptist Church; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Keefe.

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. Item B, under IV., Presentations and Proclamations, proclaiming World Polio Day and Item E, under VII., New Business, Exhibit 5, a Temporary Street Closing Application, were added.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Chandler to approve the agenda as amended.
Motion Carried Unanimously.
- C. One comment card was submitted by Mrs. Bridgette Waldau, Arts and Culture Alliance Director for Okeechobee Main Street (OKMS) providing an update on the final items to complete Cattlemen’s Square. The concrete pads around the base of the sculptures have been installed; the entrance sign is scheduled to be installed on October 21, 2022; and the final brick pavers will be installed in approximately six weeks.

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

- A. Mayor Watford presented the Proclamation to Mr. Jonathan Bean and Ms. Edna Malagon, of Martha’s House, that was read into the record as follows: **“Whereas, one in every four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime; and Whereas, victims should have help to find the compassion, comfort and hearing they need, and domestic abusers should be punished to the full extent of the law; and Whereas, fleeing domestic violence has caused women and children to be the fastest growing homeless population; and Whereas, powerful partnerships exist locally between the City of Okeechobee and Martha’s House Domestic Violence Services; and Whereas, the President of the United States and Congress as well as other Federal agencies have expressed a commitment to eliminating domestic violence both nationally and internationally. 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 2022 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in the City of Okeechobee in recognition of the important work done by Domestic Violence Programs and victims’ service providers. I urge all citizens to actively participate in the scheduled activities and programs sponsored by Martha’s House of Okeechobee and other community organizations to work toward the elimination of personal and institutional violence against women and girls.”**
- B. Item Added: Mayor Watford presented the Proclamation to Mrs. Toni Wiersma, President, Rotary Club of Okeechobee, and read into the record as follows: **“Whereas, Rotary is a global network of neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who unite and take action to create lasting change in communities across the globe; and Whereas, the Rotary motto, Service Above Self, inspires members to provide humanitarian service, follow high ethical standards, and promote goodwill and peace in the world; and Whereas, Rotary in 1985 launched PolioPlus and in 1988 helped establish the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which today includes the World Health Organization, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to immunize the children of the world against polio; and Whereas, polio cases have dropped by 99.9 percent since 1988 and the world stands on the threshold of eradicating the disease; and Whereas, to date, Rotary has contributed more than \$2.2 billion dollars and countless volunteer hours to protecting nearly 3 billion children in 122 countries. Rotary is working to raise an additional \$50 million per year, which would be leveraged for maximum impact by an additional \$100 million annually from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and Whereas, these efforts are providing much-needed operational support, medical staff, laboratory equipment, and educational materials for health workers and parents. Rotary has played a major role in decisions by donor governments to contribute more than \$10 billion to the effort; and Whereas, there are over 1.2 million Rotary members in more than 36,000 clubs throughout the world that sponsor service projects to address such critical issues as poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy, and the environment in their local communities and abroad. Now, Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, Florida, do hereby proclaim October 24, 2022, as World Polio Day in the City of Okeechobee and encourage all citizens to join me and the Rotary Club of Okeechobee and Rotary International in the fight for a polio-free world.”**

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS CONTINUED

- C. Mrs. Robin Brock was honored for her 22 years of service and presented with a Certificate of Retirement by Mayor Watford and Administrator Gary Ritter. She was accompanied by her husband Tommie Brock, her parents Mr. Lindell and Mrs. Virginia Selvey, her daughters and several grandchildren. The Certificate was read into the record as follows: "Whereas, Mrs. Robin L. Brock, began her municipal public service career on November 3, 2000, in the Administration Department under the direction of City Administrator Bill Veach; and Whereas, during her tenure, her duties and responsibilities expanded, changing her job title from Administrative Secretary to Executive Secretary, and then to Executive Assistant; and Whereas, being admired by her co-workers as impartial and fair, was elected to represent the Administration Department, General Services Department, and Office of the City Clerk employees on the Employee Grievance Committee for nineteen years, serving from January 2001 through December 2008, and from January 2012 to present day; and Whereas, Robin was elected to the Board of Trustees by her co-workers to represent their interests on the General Employees' Pension Fund, from January 20, 2006 through November 10, 2008; and Whereas, in addition to Mr. Veach she also served, but more importantly trained, City Administrators Brian Whitehall, Marcos Montes De Oca, and Gary Ritter, as well as Interim City Administrator John Cook. Upon her retirement, Robin will have served longer than any other person in this position since its creation in 1980. Furthermore, because of her direct responsibilities, it is only fitting to include the elected officials she confidently served, which are Mayors James E. Kirk and Dowling R. Watford, Jr., two City Clerks, and 12 City Council Members. And we would be remiss not to mention the two City Attorneys, John R. Cook, and John J. Fumero. Now, Therefore, this Certificate is presented on this 18th day of October 2022, to recognize Robin's 22 years of faithful service and her official retirement date of October 31, 2022. She will always be known for her incredible work ethic, and as an exceptional ambassador for the City. May you be proud of the work you have done and the difference you have made. We Will Miss You!"

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to:

- A. [Dispense with the reading and] approve the meeting Minutes for September 26, 2022, and October 4, 2022; and
- B. Approve the Warrant Register for September 2022 [in the amounts: General Fund, \$313,806.20; Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$31,786.95; Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$4.28; and Industrial Development Fund, \$6,665.85; as presented].

Motion Carried Unanimously.

VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:32 P.M.

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1262 regarding Comprehensive Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Amendment Application No. 22-006-SSA, reclassifying from Public Facilities (PF) to Single-Family Residential (SFR), 0.33+/- acres, Lots 6 and 7 of Block 5, ROYAL OAK ADDITION, Plat Book 1, Page 8, Okeechobee County public records, and located at Southwest (SW) 3rd Avenue and 23rd Street submitted by the City as the property owner [as presented in **Exhibit 1**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1262 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 FLUM ON A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN FROM PF TO SFR, APPLICATION NO. 22-006-SSA; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION OF ORDINANCE AND REVISED FLUM IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Jarriel to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1262. The Planning Staff Report finds the request is reasonably compatible with adjacent uses and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Planning Staff and Planning Board recommend approval. There were no public comments. Administrator Ritter responded to Mayor Watford's inquiry as to whether there were any unique circumstances with this property in relation to the Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA), due to this being the previous location of the SW Water Tower. Staff will delay advertising the sale of the property until the OUA determines whether they may be interested in purchasing it for the SW wastewater expansion projects. City Clerk Gamiotea noted for the record that 23 courtesy notices were mailed to the surrounding property owners, advertisements and two signs were properly posted with no objections or comments received to date. This Application has been submitted concurrent with Rezoning Petition No. 22-006-R, requesting to change zoning from Public Use (PUB) to Residential Single Family-One (RSF-1). **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Keefe to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1263 regarding Comprehensive Plan FLUM Amendment Application No. 22-007-SSA, reclassifying from SFR to PF, 0.65+/- acres, Lots 9 through 12 of Block 8, SOUTH OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 1, Page 12, Okeechobee County public records, and located at 1003 SW 3rd Avenue submitted by the City as the property owner [as presented in **Exhibit 2**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- B. Continued. City Attorney Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1263 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 FLUM ON A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN FROM SFR TO PF, APPLICATION NO. 22-007-SSA; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION OF ORDINANCE AND REVISED FLUM IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; 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. 1263.

The Planning Staff Report finds the request is reasonably compatible with adjacent uses and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Planning Staff and Planning Board recommend approval. There were no comments from the public or the Council. City Clerk Gamiotea noted for the record that 31 courtesy postcards were mailed to the surrounding property owners, advertisements and one sign were properly posted with no objections or comments received to date. This Application has been submitted concurrent with Rezoning Petition No. 22-007-R, requesting to change zoning from RSF-1 to PUB. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:38 P.M.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. A request was presented by Ms. Sonja Chapa as the Class President, Ms. Nicole Hughes as the Class Vice President, and Ms. Tiffany Gould as a Class Member, for the Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class of 2022, to install a welcome sign on the West-side of the Chamber of Commerce building (located 55 South Parrott Avenue). The sign, which is their class project, will feature three pictures highlighting agriculture and tourism with a QR code that will be linked to the community calendar on the Chamber's website. They partnered with the Okeechobee Tourism Development Council, who approved to fund \$3,275.00 projected budget for the project. Additionally, they are conducting a fundraiser on October 28, 2022, to provide a reserve for long-term maintenance of the sign. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Chandler to approve the request [as presented in **Exhibit 3**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- B. Mrs. Tammy Cook-Weedon, Director of Landscape Architecture with Calvin, Giordano, and Associates (CGA) provided an update on the progress of the Flagler Park Master Plan utilizing a fourteen-slide power point [as presented in **Exhibit 4**]. This update focused on the conceptual designs for the Veteran's Memorial Square, Block E/Park No. 1 (CGA Project Park No. 2). The schedule has shifted slightly from what was previously provided. All designs and improvements are being proposed within the set budgetary constraint of \$300,000.00 per park. She emphasized the designs are conceptual in nature and are not intended to be actual construction plans. Veteran's Memorial Square has been redesigned to include seating areas and landscape screens to provide privacy for reflection, relocating some of the existing monuments to allow the center of the park to be open for events and displays. Bronze statues to honor each branch of the military are proposed to be added, two photographs of examples were distributed at the meeting and have been incorporated into Exhibit 4 of the official minute file.

During the discussion, Mayor Watford noted the City entered into an Agreement with the American Legion several years ago when the group presented the Council with the plans to make improvements, add features, and monuments that are currently located in the park today. The Agreement spelled out that the members of the American Legion were required to maintain those improvements/monuments. Unfortunately, over the years, they have not been able to do this, but other individuals/organizations have. Due to the investment the City is considering, he directed Staff to revisit the Agreement to determine the best course of action to either dissolve or revise it. This item was for informational purposes only and no official action was required.

- C. Administrator Ritter outlined three options for pursuing a City-wide Fire Assessment. Option One: the City continues to pay the County \$600,000.00+ a year with no additional assessments to City residents and businesses. Option Two: the City continues to pay \$600,000.00+ to the County and assesses all City residents, churches, and businesses a fire tax for additional revenue. Option Three: the City renegotiates the Interlocal Agreement with the County now. A new Agreement would allow the County to assess all residents and businesses within the City and County a fire tax and the City would not be required to pay the County \$600,000.00+ for fire services.

There was a three (Chandler, Jarriel, and Clark) to two (Keefe and Watford) consensus to continue with option one and address future fire assessment issues when the Interlocal Agreement is due for renewal in approximately five years.

VII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- D. Administrator Ritter conveyed a request from the County. When the new Judicial Center was built (at 312 Northwest 3rd Street, behind the existing Court House), the County could not meet the number of on-site required parking spaces. The City entered into a Parking Agreement with the County allowing for contingencies and included, by exhibit, a lease agreement between the County and the First United Methodist Church (FUMC), where a 92-space parking lot was built on FUMC property that is located East of the Judicial Center and Court House. That lease agreement expires at the end of 2022. The County is requesting the City reconsider their requirement for the 92-space parking lot based on the number of on-street parking spaces. Mayor Watford expressed great concern that allowing this would set a precedent. This item was for informational purposes only and no official action was required at this time.
- E. Item Added: Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to approve a Temporary Street Closing Application submitted by First Baptist Church for a portion of SW 4th Street, between SW 5th and 6th Avenues, from 5:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. on October 31, 2022, for the annual Fall Festival. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VIII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Researching ordinances related to food trucks and new Florida Statutes preemptions, amendments to existing City regulations will be forthcoming;
- Working with Staff to revise the current matrix used in determining lien reductions, options to be presented at a future Council meeting;
- Reviewing Business Tax Receipts issues;
- Continuing to work on drafting an ordinance limiting the use of fireworks.

IX. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- A City Charter Referendum Question information flyer is being distributed via the OUA invoices to City and County customers;
- Working with OKMS and the Economic Development Corporation on the South Park Street endcap landscaping project;
- Following Hurricane Ian, concerns were raised regarding the antenna located behind the Public Safety Building (former Fire Station), as it appears to have been damaged. The antenna is no longer in use, preliminary costs to remove it are higher than anticipated, he will continue to research options.

X. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler noted that the monuments placed in Veteran's Park were viewed by the individuals that initially installed them as, "what won the war."

Council Member Jarriel encouraged everyone to vote in the upcoming General Election on November 8, 2022, and to attend the political forum scheduled for October 25, 2022.

Council Member Keefe congratulated Mrs. Brock on her retirement.

Council Member Clark:

- Inquired about attending the meetings with the local veterans regarding the Veterans Memorial Square within Flagler Park. Clerk Gamiotea explained that the meetings are not being noticed since she was advised that only Mayor Watford and Administrator Ritter would be attending them and then report any issues needing full Council approval. Should other Council Members want to attend them, then they would be required to be noticed;
- Asked how much money was left over from OKMS from completing the Cattlemen's Square Project, that the City could use on other blocks within Flagler Park;
- Expressed appreciation to Mrs. Brock for her professionalism and dedication throughout the years.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:54 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.