



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
NOVEMBER 1, 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 November 1, 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 Jarriel.

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A. There were no requests for items to be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda. Mayor Watford noted Item A, under IV., Consent Agenda, should read, approve the Minutes for October 18, 2022, as revised.

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

C. One comment card was submitted by Mrs. Raia Black conveying her concern that the Referendum question on the November 8, 2022, General Election ballot adopting a new City Charter, included the position of the City Clerk being changed from an elected position to an appointed one. She questioned why the change for the position of the City Clerk was included when that was not the recommendation from the Citizen Charter Review Advisory Review Committee and why the Council did not separate the two issues on the ballot into two questions, as requested by the public at two Hearings. She stated she will be voting No for the Charter if only to keep the City Clerk position elected by the people.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Chandler to [dispense with the reading and] approve the meeting Minutes for October 18, 2022, as revised. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

V. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR QUASI-JUDICIAL ITEMS AT 6:07 P.M.

The following items are quasi-judicial in nature. In accordance with section 286.0115, Florida Statutes (FS), 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 Council 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, FS.). In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 286.26, FS, 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. 1264, regarding Rezoning Petition No. 22-006-R, submitted by the City as the property owner, to rezone Lots 6 and 7 of Block 5, ROYAL OAK ADDITION, located at Southwest (SW) 3rd Avenue and 23rd Street, from Public Use (PUB) to Residential Single Family-One (RSF-1) [approximately 0.33 acres, the proposed use is to list the property for sale, as presented in **Exhibit 1**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney John Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1264 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 PUB TO RSF-1, PETITION NO. 22-006-R; AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1264. The Planning Board unanimously recommends approval based on the findings required per Code of Ordinances Section 70-340 and analyzed in the Planning Staff Report which finds the request is reasonably compatible with adjacent uses, consistent with the urbanizing pattern of the area, and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. There were no comments from the public or the Council. Clerk Gamiotea noted for the record 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 Petition was submitted concurrent with Application No. 22-006-SSA that was adopted on October 18, 2022, reclassifying the Future Land Use (FLU) from Public Facilities (PF) to Single Family Residential (SFR). **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

V. QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1265, regarding Rezoning Petition No. 22-007-R, submitted by the City as the property owner, to rezone Lots 9 through 12 of Block 8, SOUTH OKEECHOBEE, located at 1003 SW 3rd Avenue, from RSF-1 to PUB [approximately 0.65 acres, for the proposed use of allowing the operation of a public museum, as presented in **Exhibit 2**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1265 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 RSF-1 TO PUB, PETITION NO. 22-007-R; AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Keefe to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1265. The Planning Board unanimously recommends approval based on the findings required per Code of Ordinances Section 70-340 and analyzed in the Planning Staff Report which finds the request is reasonably compatible with adjacent uses, consistent with the urbanizing pattern of the area, and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. There were no comments from the public or Council. Clerk Gamiotea noted for the record 31 courtesy notices were mailed to the surrounding property owners, advertisements and one sign were properly posted, with no objections or comments received to date. This Petition was submitted concurrent with Application No. 22-007-SSA that was adopted on October 18, 2022, reclassifying the FLU from SFR to PF. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:13 P.M.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Ms. Alaina Barron, Executive Director, of the Education Foundation of Okeechobee, gave a presentation utilizing a 12-slide power point [as presented in **Exhibit 3**]. It provided their mission, her education, background, and experience; their scholarship program which distributed 216 scholarships last year; the "mini-grants" that support Okeechobee County teachers, \$42,510.00 was awarded last year. The Pencil Depot Program, of which 61 percent of teachers are currently participating in provides school supplies to students and teachers. The Foundation is increasing the economic opportunities and social mobility for Okeechobee by assisting local students with securing financial aid for college through their College and Career Readiness Program, which is their largest program. The statistics show that 60 to 70 percent of local students receive free or reduced lunch but only 20 to 30 percent completed the Free Application Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) last year. Okeechobee County ranks 54th among the 67 counties in Florida for the number of residents with a high-quality degree or credential. The main activities of the College and Career Program are: FAFSA workshops offered at OHS and Indian River State College (IRSC) with a meal, raffle, and on-site assistance to complete their FAFSA. The first one hundred students who complete a FAFSA are awarded a \$20.00 gift card as a part of the FAFSA Challenge. The Foundation, along with FAFSA experts from IRSC, travel to low-income areas, where travel may be a barrier to participation in the workshops. The reason for the focus on getting a FAFSA completed is that 90 percent of students who submit a FAFSA go on to attend college. The SAT/ACT test preparation was successful last year and has been expanded from a five-day workshop to a weekly program this year. This item was for informational purposes only and no official action was required.

Administrator Ritter noted the Shared Services funding in the City Council Budget will be paid to the Education Foundation. **[Notation:** the Shared Services Board is no longer in existence and will be removed from the City Liaison Board list. The Mayor was appointed to serve on that Board. The Education Foundation Board does not include a liaison member from the City Council.]

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Clark to approve a Memorandum of Understanding between Okeechobee County Economic Development Corporation and the City of Okeechobee for Installation of Landscaping Endcaps [along the South side of South Park Street, as presented in Revised **Exhibit 4**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. Based on the discussion during the Okeechobee Utility Authority's (OUA) last update at the October 4, 2022, meeting, Executive Director, Mr. John Hayford, addressed the Council regarding the SW 5th Avenue Septic-to-Sewer Conversion Project. A nine-page document was distributed and has been incorporated into the official minute file, outlining the service area of the Project and the three options to install a vacuum sewer, gravity sewer, or low-pressure sewer system. Mr. Hayford reviewed the factors considered in the decision-making process and what led the OUA to consider a low-pressure system for the service area West of SW 3rd Avenue and then a gravity system East of SW 3rd Avenue for the Commercial Corridor area.

VI. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- C. Continued. OUA Chairperson, Mr. John Creasman, and consulting engineer, Mr. Jeff Sumner, responded to questions and concerns raised. When asked for a consensus, Council Members Jarriel and Keefe did not have a preference on an option used. Council Member Chandler's home is on a gravity system which he said works great. Mayor Watford was in favor of proceeding with the OUA's recommendation. Council Member Clark requested to use either the gravity or vacuum system. The conclusion was for any of the Council to attend the OUA meeting to convey their concerns to the Board.
- D. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Keefe to approve the purchase of a Caterpillar [430 07a] Backhoe Loader from Kelly Tractor in the amount of \$135,276.00 [per the Florida Sheriff's Association Contract/State Bid, as presented in **Exhibit 5**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- E. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Chandler to approve the purchase of a 2023 Ford F-250 [single-cab, 2x4] Truck from Bozard Government Sales in the amount of \$40,778.00 [per the Florida Sheriff's Association Contract/State Bid, as presented in **Exhibit 6**] for the Public Works Department. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- F. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to approve authorizing payment to SHI International Corporation for six laptops [per State Contract] regarding FDLE Florida Incident-Based Reporting System (FIBRS) Grant 2021-FBSFA-F2-043 and to [approve a sole source] purchase for the TRACS Interface Software to meet State compliance [as presented in **Exhibit 7**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- G. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to approve a Florida Department of Environmental Protection Grant Agreement LPA0350, Taylor Creek SE 8th Avenue Stormwater Conveyance Improvements Phase II [as presented in **Exhibit 8**]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Reviewing a Special Exception Petition for a new cell tower that was deferred at the Board of Adjustment meeting on October 20, 2022;
- Working on the title and legal description of Cattlemen's Square, required for the Department of Environmental Protection Grant;
- Drafting ordinances on storm water, food trucks, and an appeal process for Business Tax Receipts revocation;
- Continuing to work with Staff to revise the Code Enforcement lien reduction matrix.

VIII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Working on a goals, objectives, and priorities list for Fiscal Year 2022-23, planning to present to Council by the first meeting in December;
- Will be meeting with the Veterans on November 4, 2022, to further discuss placement of the guns in Veteran's Square of Flagler Park and noting Okeechobee Main Street will be brought in eventually on this. Council Member Chandler will be attending in Mayor Watford's absence.

IX. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler noted, in regard to Veteran's Square, the Veterans should decide what goes in the park, rather than others.

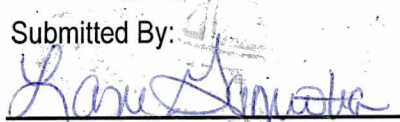
Council Member Jarriel reminded everyone to vote in the upcoming General Election on November 8, 2022.

Council Member Clark expressed concern over phone calls she received regarding the Charter and inquired about how to respond on social media without violating Sunshine Laws, Attorney Fumero provided clarification.

Mayor Watford stated he wanted to clarify the statement being circulated that the Charter has not been updated since the 1960s. There have been several revisions made to the Charter, just not a complete overhaul since then.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:50 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.