



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
MARCH 15, 2022, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on March 15, 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 Chad Keathley, Okeechobee Church of God, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Chandler.

II. ATTENDANCE

Roll was taken by Deputy Clerk Rose Torres 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- A. There were no requests for items be added, deferred, or withdrawn from the agenda.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. An introduction and one comment card were submitted for public participation for issues not on the agenda.
 - Finance Director India Riedel introduced Ashley Weikert, who was recently hired to fill the full-time Administrative Secretary/Business Tax Receipt (BTR) Specialist position.
 - Mr. Devon Nelson of 19975 Northwest (NW) 80th Drive, Okeechobee, spoke on the future development of Okeechobee, proposing the leadership of the community mobilize people and resources to attract millions of dollars of investments in various business avenues. Asserting that existing architecture should be utilized better. He suggested that organizing as a community with real estate development would cause a rebound to increase educational outcome, employment success, family, asset building, and community resilience.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to:

- A. [Dispense with the reading and] approve the meeting Minutes for March 1, 2022 [as presented].
 - B. Approve the Warrant Register for February 2022 [in the amounts of: General Fund, \$403,169.78; Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$19,646.57; and Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$3,621.02, as presented].
- Motion Carried Unanimously.**

V. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR QUASI-JUDICIAL ITEMS AT 6:23 P.M.

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Keefe to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1249, regarding Petition No. 22-001-R, rezoning Blocks 110 and 121, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County public records; 3.9+/- acres from Heavy Commercial (CHV) to Residential Multiple Family (RMF), submitted by property owner F. Mitch Stephens/Glenwood Park, LLC. The vacant property is located between Northeast (NE) 2nd to 3rd Avenues and 3rd to 5th Streets, for the proposed use of a multi-family structure. The Planning Board recommends approval [as presented in Exhibit 1]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

City Attorney Greg Hyden was in attendance on behalf of Attorney John Fumero, and read proposed Ordinance No. 1249 by title only as follows: “**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING CERTAIN TRACTS OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM CHV TO RMF, PETITION NO. 22-001-R; AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**”

Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Keefe to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1249. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment once they were sworn in. Attorney Hyden collectively administered an Oath to City Planner Jim LaRue, of LaRue Planning and Management Services, 1375 Jackson Street, Suite 206, Fort Myers, Florida, and Mr. Steve Dobbs of 209 NE 2nd Street, Okeechobee. Planner LaRue presented the Planning Staff Report findings included in Exhibit 1. Mr. Dobbs, representing Mr. Stephens, thanked the Council Members for supporting the rezoning.

V. QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- A. Continued. Mr. Stephens submitted a written comment and Mayor Watford read it into the record as follows: "I want to reiterate my appreciation to the Council for approving the Glenwood Park rezoning, and I plan on attending many more meetings in the future. My project is progressing on schedule, and we hope to submit plans to the Technical Review Committee (TRC) in the next few months." **Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1245, regarding Petition No. 22-002-R, rezoning a total of 54.8+/- unplatted acres from Holding and Residential Mobile Home (RMH) to CHV (16.8+/- acres) and RMF (38.0+/- acres), submitted by property owner Gad Reggev/Blue Spring Holdings LLC. The vacant property is located in the NE section of the City boundaries, situated East of Taylor Creek, South of the railroad track, West of the NE City Limits (NE 13th Avenue), and surrounds River Run Phase 2 subdivision to the North, East, and South. The proposed use is a multi-family residential community and household storage facility [as presented in Exhibit 2]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Hyden read proposed Ordinance No. 1245 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING CERTAIN TRACTS OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM HOLDING AND RMH TO CHV AND RMF, PETITION NO. 22-002-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 Chandler to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1245 and set April 5, 2022, as the final public hearing date. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment once they were sworn in. Attorney Greg Hyden collectively administered an Oath to Planner LaRue of 1375 Jackson Street, Suite 206, Fort Myers, Florida, and Mr. Dobbs of 209 NE 2nd Street, Okeechobee. Planner LaRue presented the Planning Staff Report findings included in Exhibit 2, and the Planning Board's recommendation for approval. Mayor Watford inquired as to the accessibility of the development should the only option be NE 8th Avenue, through the River Run subdivision. Mr. Dobbs stated, for now that is the only option, we are working toward adding another entry point at the SE 10th/Domer Avenue traffic light in coordination with the new RaceTrac Truckstop. Mayor Watford then stated his concern with any traffic being added to the River Run subdivision. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- C. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1246, regarding Petition No. 21-006-R, rezoning Lots 23-24 of Block 3, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County public records; 0.4+/- acres from RMF to CHV, submitted by property owner Muhammad Nooruddin. The vacant property is located at 204 NW 13th Street, the proposed use is a storage facility [as presented in Exhibit 3]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Hyden read proposed Ordinance No. 1246 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING CERTAIN TRACTS OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM RMF TO CHV, PETITION NO. 21-006-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 approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1246 and set April 5, 2022, as the final public hearing date. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment once they were sworn in. Attorney Hyden collectively administered an Oath to Planner LaRue of 1375 Jackson Street, Suite 206, Fort Myers, Florida, and Mr. Nooruddin of 7993 Steeplechase Court, Port Saint. Lucie, Florida. Planner LaRue presented the Planning Staff Report findings included in Exhibit 3, and the Planning Board's recommendation for approval. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE QUASI-JUDICIAL PORTION OF THE AGENDA AND OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR ORDINANCE ADOPTION AT 6:47 P.M.

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Jarriel to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1231, closing the alleyway in Block 110, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County public records; Abandonment of Right-of-Way Petition No. 21-001-AC, postponed from the January 18, 2022, final public hearing. The Planning Board recommends approval [as presented in Exhibit 4]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VI. PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- A. Continued. Attorney Hyden reread proposed Ordinance No.1231 by title only as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; VACATING AND ABANDONING CERTAIN RIGHTS-OF-WAY BEING AN UNIMPROVED PORTION OF AN ALLEYWAY LYING WITHIN BLOCK 110, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 5, PAGE 5, PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA (PETITION NO. 21-001-AC); RESERVING UNTO THE CITY, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS A NON-EXCLUSIVE EASEMENT FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES PURPOSES; DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK TO RECORD THE ORDINANCE IN THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF THE CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA; 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. 1231. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment. Planner LaRue presented the Planning Staff Report and the findings of the TRC. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Chandler to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1232, closing the alleyway in Block 121, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County public records; Abandonment of Right-of-Way Petition No. 21-002-AC, postponed from the January 18, 2022, final public hearing. The Planning Board recommends approval [as presented in Exhibit 5]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Hyden read proposed Ordinance No.1232 by title only as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; VACATING AND ABANDONING CERTAIN RIGHTS-OF-WAY BEING AN UNIMPROVED PORTION OF AN ALLEYWAY LYING WITHIN BLOCK 121, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 5, PAGE 5, PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA (PETITION NO. 21-002-AC); RESERVING UNTO THE CITY, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS A NON-EXCLUSIVE EASEMENT FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES PURPOSES; DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK TO RECORD THE ORDINANCE IN THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF THE CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”**

Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance 1232. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment. Planner LaRue stated this mirrors Ordinance No. 1231. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- C. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Clark to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1250, updating the Capital Improvements Five-Year Schedule within the Comprehensive Plan. The local Planning Agency recommends approval [as presented in Exhibit 6]. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

Attorney Hyden read proposed Ordinance No.1250 by title only as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; UPDATING THE FIVE-YEAR SCHEDULE OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS OF THE CITY’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS MANDATED BY FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 163.3177(3)(b); PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”**

Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Clark to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1250. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comment. Planner LaRue presented the Planning Staff Report findings. **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:55 P.M.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Motion and second by Council Members Clark and Jarriel to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2022-02 for authorization to implement a Florida Boating Improvement Program Grant [for the SE 4th Street boat ramp as presented in Exhibit 7].

Attorney Hyden read proposed Resolution No. 2022-02 by title only as follows: **“A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORIZATION FOR THE CITY TO MAKE AND PERFECT A GRANT APPLICATION FOR ASSISTANCE UNDER THE FLORIDA BOATING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM; PROVIDING FOR LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT; PROVIDING FOR IMPLEMENTING ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS; PROVIDING FOR A SAVINGS PROVISION; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”** **Motion Carried Unanimously.**

VII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- B. Motion and second by Council Members Keefe and Jarriel to award RFQ No. ADM-01-32-11-21, General Planning Services to Morris-Depew Associates, Inc. **Motion Carried Four to One.**

VIII. CITY DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Finance Director Riedel distributed a three-page report, which has been incorporated in the official minute file.

- March activity report which included the comparison of Fiscal Year 2021-22 General Fund budgeted amounts to actual. A mid-year Budget Amendment will be presented at a future meeting for the increased allocation for the Cattleman's Square in Flagler Park, the purchase of the Primitive Baptist Church property, the increase in the new Planner contract, increased fuel expenses and the Canal Cleanup contract that was recently approved. The Fiscal Year 2020-21 Audit is in process and should be presented to the Council in May.
- Administrative Secretary/BTR Specialist Weikert has been helping new business owners get acclimated in the City and is in charge of collecting all delinquent BTR's; as of today, 121 business will be forwarded to Code Enforcement. In the month of February, 13 new or ownership change BTR applications were processed. This makes 54 total since October 2021, compared to the 32 from the previous fiscal year.

General Services Coordinator Patty Burnette:

Building:

- Permits issued the first five months surpassed the projected budget revenues.
- New RaceTrac Truck Stop project is on schedule and will be opening in June. First Baptist Church is doing well on building their new sanctuary. The permits have been issued for the new car wash [Brahman Car Wash, 1612 South Parrot Avenue] and site work is coming along. The 12 condominiums [Bridgewater on Taylor Creek] that are being built on SE 8th Avenue are on schedule.

Planning:

- Altobello property [1105 South Parrott Avenue] sold and the new owner is working on submitting a future land use change and rezoning.
- An expired site plan to develop a 190-unit residential complex [Emerald Greens, SW 6th Street] may be resubmitted and reissued.
- At the upcoming March 17, 2022, Planning Board meeting, Administrator Ritter will address the Joint Workshop to be held on May 24, 2022.
- Administrator Ritter has sent a letter to the owner of the 80-acres located to the East of the Airi Acres subdivision, to consider annexing the property into the City.

Public Works Director David Allen and Maintenance Foreman Marvin Roberts:

- Presented a 12 slide PowerPoint, which has been incorporated into the official minute file, covered work completed from January to early March, which included 70 work orders. Most were drainage issues, others were City facilities, street signs, potholes, leveling sidewalks, and the progress of the Street Striping Project, and Canal Cleanup Project.
- Currently down one Maintenance Operator. Recently hired two new Maintenance Operators, Dalton Pitts and the first ever female, Pamela Barton.
- Cattleman Square of Flagler Park is coming along great.
- Distributed a list of the top eight priority roadways to be paved and the estimated costs. Two projects not prioritized are SW 5th Avenue and SE 8th Avenue that are highlighted for grants to cover the cost. The one-page list has been incorporated into the official minute file.
- Weekly inspections will be completed on services provided by the City's current landscaping contractor.
- Will be sending three employees to obtain their required Commercial Driver's License (CDL). The two new hires have their CDLs.

Police Chief Donald Hagan:

- In February, 150 citations and 354 warnings were issued. There were 29 crashes, with 497 incidents. 412 calls for service, including but not limited to crimes, thefts and/or barking dogs.
- Hackers have gotten better at scamming. A business received a call from their supposed bank that unfortunately led the scammers to the business's bank information and money. Best advice is to hang up and call your financial intuition yourself.
- Filled one of two vacant Officer positions, they will be introduced once training is completed. The new Dispatcher is working well learning the position. It has been a difficult time filling positions because Treasure Coast law enforcement agencies' starting salaries are higher, and due to the decrease of police academy cadets.

Fire Chief Herb Smith

- Chief Smith gave an update on the remaining Fire Department equipment. Engines 5, 6, and 7 were sold, leaving one truck to be sold by the end of the month as well as any remaining equipment. The radios will be transferred to the Police Department.

IX. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

Attorney Hyden had no new information to provide.

X. ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Thanked Attorney Hyden for the work he has done with Code Enforcement.
- Update on the State Appropriations Funds. The Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) will fund \$200,000 for lighting, and other fixtures needed in Cattleman's Square of Flagler Park, and \$50,000 for improvements to Centennial Park. The SE 8th Avenue Storm Water Quality Assistance Grant is pending approval. Not approved was the request for improvements to City Hall. However, he will contact the Department of Economic Opportunity to see what grants the City can apply for.
- A revised Reserve Fund Policy will be presented next month for adoption.
- May 24th at 6:00 P.M. will be the Joint City Council and Planning Board Workshop, with a representative from the Central Florida Regional Planning Council to facilitate.

XI. CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Chandler:

- Thanked the Staff for their hard work and dedication.
- Suggested to Director Allen to investigate whether a Class B Driver's license instead of a CDL may meet the regulations.

Council Member Jarriel:

- Thanked the Staff for their reports.
- Wants to send a letter to LaRue Planning and Management Services, Inc., thanking them for their years of service.
- The parade was a success even through the rain.
- City is growing and he is proud to be a part of Okeechobee.

Council Member Keefe:


- Thanked the Administrator for adding the City's mission statement on the agenda.
- This month is Women's History Month, wanted to recognize and honor the Staff who work for the City and their achievements for the City and community.
- The Country of Ukraine is currently at War with Russia and to keep both Countries in your prayers.
- Budget Workshops will be coming up, he would like to save the taxpayers money, and requested that proposed Budget requests address actual Department needs. For example, the Public Works annual sidewalks, and asphalt projects are budgeted needs.

Council Member Monica Clark

- Appreciates the hard work of the Police Officers and pleased with their response time.

XII. ADJOURN, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 8:17 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.