TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 16, 2023 – 4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 EAST MAIN STREET, TAVARES

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Walter Price, Mayor
Sandy Gamble, Vice Mayor
Bob Grenier, Council Member
Lori Pfister, Council Member
Troy Singer, Council Member

STAFF PRESENT

John Drury, City Administrator
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney
Susie Novack, City Clerk
Antonio Fabre, Interim Community Development Director
Scott Aldrich, Community Services Director
Bob Tweedie, Economic Development Director
Lori Houghton, Finance Director
Richard Keith, Fire Chief
Crissy Bublitz, Human Resources Director
James Dillon, Public Works Director
Mark O'Keefe, Public Communications Director
Sarah Coursey, Police Chief
Phil Clark, Utilities Director

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Price called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He asked those who wished to speak on an agenda item to complete and submit a Request to Speak form.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Tab 1. Richard Keith, Fire Chief, Tavares Fire Department

Fire Chief Richard Keith, Tavares Fire Department, provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if there were any changes to the Agenda. Mr. Drury said the staff had no changes.

Council Member Pfister asked to move Tab 9, Golf Cart Crossing Request, from New Business to Old Business.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve the Agenda with the Change [Move Tab 9 from New Business to Old Business], seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. Tavares Chamber of Commerce Update

Erika Buigas, President and CEO of the Tavares Chamber of Commerce provided an update on Chamber activities and events.

Council Member Singer said he was happy to see the Taste of Tavares event return.

V. SWEARING IN BY CITY ATTORNEY AND DISCLOSURE OF EXPARTE COMMUNICATIONS

Attorney Holt said there were no quasi-judicial matters before the Council for consideration.

VI. READING OF ALL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS INTO THE RECORD

Ms. Novack read the following Resolution by title only:

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-12

A RESOLUTION OF CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA; RELATING TO THE STATE REVOLVING FUND LOAN PROGRAM: ADOPTING THE FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR THE LAKE FRANCES WATER PROJECT AND THE LAKE FRANCES WASTEWATER PROJECT; AND PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND EFFECTIVE DATE.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if anyone wished to pull an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion. There were no requests.

Council Member Pfister departed the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried 4-0 with Lori Pfister absent from the vote.

Tab 3. Approval of the August 2, 2023, City Council Meeting and Budget Workshop Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 4. Resolution 2023-12 – Council to Approve Fiscal Sustainability Plan for SRF Loans 350951 and 350961 – Lake Frances Water and Lake Frances Sewer Projects

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

> *Previously, the City of Tavares City Council authorized State Revolving Loan Agreements for Lake Frances Water Improvements (SRF350961), and Lake Frances Wastewater Improvements including Lift Station 49 (SRF 350951).*
>
> *The projects have been completed, and the final close-out tasks are in process. Section 8.11 titled Fiscal Sustainability Plan requires a Fiscal Sustainability Plan approved by the City Council in order to close-out the State Revolving Loans (SRF) for the Projects (350951 and 350961) with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). The final loan draw cannot be authorized by the FDEP for disbursement until the Plan has been approved by the City Council.*
>
> *An excerpt from Section 8.11 of the Loan agreement is provided below:*
>
> "The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPCA), under Section 603(d)(I)E(i) of that act, requires a recipient of a Loan for a project that involves the repair, replacement, or expansion of a treatment works to develop and implement a Fiscal Sustainability Plan or certify that it has developed and implemented such a plan."
>
> *City Council Approval of Resolution 2023-12 provides approval of the Fiscal Sustainability Plan for the State Revolving Loan Fund Lake Frances Projects (SRF Loans 350951 and 350961), and will allow final loan disbursements, and close-out for the loans.*

Staff recommends Option 1 for Council move to approve Resolution 2023-12 providing approval for the Lake Frances SRF Loan Projects 350951 and 350960 Fiscal Sustainability Plan.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution 2023-12 providing approval of the Fiscal Sustainability Plan for the State Revolving Laon Fund Lake Frances Estate Projects (SRF Loans 350951 and 350961, and allowing final loan disbursement and close-out for the loans. The motion was seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried 4-0 with Lori Pfister absent from the vote.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 5. Customer Request from Janice Robinson for Capital Charge Financing Agreement Forgiveness

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

On October 21, 2021, Janice Robinson initiated a Building Permit for a single-family residence at 2113 Bexley Dr., Tavares. (Alt Key 3854772). Contractor Rickard Construction & Land applied for and was issued Permit Number 21-00001589 for the new home construction at the property.

Section 17-44.1 of the Land Development Regulations allows for any new City of Tavares utility customer who is the subject of a Forced Connection is eligible to finance the payment of his water and/or wastewater capital charges over a 5-year term at a fixed interest rate equal to prime (as established by LIBOR), plus 1%, at the beginning of the term.

As Ms. Robinson was required to connect to City water and City sewer, Ms. Robinson requested a financing plan for payment of the capital charges and impact fees. Ms. Robinson executed a Capital Charge Financing Agreement in the amount of $4,800.00. The agreement is for a five- year term. Monthly payments are set at $86.78.

Ms. Robinson has contacted the City of Tavares Finance Department requesting forgiveness of the Capital Charge Financing Agreement. Ms. Robinson was requested to forward her request to the City in writing. A copy of Ms. Robinson's email with attached letter (unsigned), and related attachments are provided to the City Council for their review.

Financing Agreement will result in uncollected charges of $3,285.83.

Council Member Pfister rejoined the meeting at 4:14 p.m.

Mr. Drury said the funds are owed to the Utility Funds and must be paid. He said if the Council approves, the funds would be paid from General Fund tax dollars to subsidize the request due to bond requirements.

Mayor Price asked the Council for comments.

Council Member Singer asked if Ms. Robinson was present in the audience. There was no response. Ms. Houghton said Ms. Robinson was notified that the Council would hear the item during the meeting.

Vice Mayor Gamble asked if the Finance Department provided alternative assistance. Mr. Drury said the City recommended Ms. Robinson contact the Lake Community Action Agency. Ms. Houghton noted the DEO Florida Commerce in Tallahassee had a program to assist homeowners with hardships, and she advised Ms. Robinson. Ms. Robinson indicated she applied to a program and was advised there was no more funding. Ms. Houghton said she was unaware of which program Ms. Robinson was referring to.

Council Member Singer said he sympathized with Ms. Robinson's issues and noted the fees would have to be paid by the taxpayers. He said it is difficult for the Council to move forward with the request because paying for one person's obligations was unfair and would set a precedence. He said obtaining assistance from other organizations would be better suited. Council Member Pfister concurred.

Council Member Grenier said he felt Ms. Robinson would find an organization to assist her.

Mayor Price concurred with the Council and said an exception could not be made for one.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to deny the request, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Council Member Grenier asked Ms. Houghton to advise which organization provided assistance if she happened to find out.

Tab 6. Appropriate Reserves for Police Laptops

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

The City of Tavares Police Department utilizes the Lake County Sheriff's Office's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software for dispatch. The Sheriff's office has notified the city that they will be upgrading the software on April 1, 2024. The updated software minimum requirements exceed the specifications of the computers that the City's Police Department currently use for dispatch.

In order to meet the new minimum system requirements, staff requests City Council authorization to purchase forty (40) new rugged laptops and twenty-six (26) mounts for the Police Department utilizing General Fund reserves. The cost to purchase the laptops and mounts is $175,004.12. General Fund reserves will be reduced by $175,004, and the FY 2023 Adopted Budget will be amended to include the purchase of the Police laptops.

Staff recommends Option 1, for Council to authorize staff to purchase new laptops for the Police Department utilizing General Fund reserves.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve, seconded by Lori Pfister.

Vice Mayor Gamble said the City should move forward quickly with the purchase to ensure no delays in receiving parts due to demand. Ms. Houghton noted several area Police departments would be buying identical laptops.

Council Member Singer said the purchase was needed to communicate with dispatch services. He asked when the City was notified of the change-over. Ms. Houghton and Chief Coursey noted within the past month. He stated Reserves are used to pay for unforeseen items. Council Member Singer inquired about the old laptops. Ms. Houghton said they met their useful life and noted security concerns would not make them favorable to utilize for a second job.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

XI. BUDGET WORKSHOP

Tab 7. Budget Workshop – Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The General Fund budget was presented to Council at the July 19th budget workshop. The Enterprise and Special Revenue Fund budgets were presented to Council at the August 2nd budget workshop. The City Council set the maximum tentative millage rate of 6.5950 mills, and the maximum tentative voted debt *millage rate of 0.1817 mills at the July 19th budget workshop. At this meeting the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan will be presented, after which the Council will have an opportunity to discuss it, and the FY 2024 Proposed Budget.*

Ms. Houghton provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

Mr. Drury said staff would bring back a final budget at the September Public Hearings for additional opportunities for public input and any changes.

Tab 8. Budget Workshop – Updates to FY 2024 Proposed Budget

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The current proposed draft budget is fully balanced, has a lower millage rate, increases reserves, provides a similar level of service and takes care of employees. At the previous Budget Workshop, Council continued budget deliberations.

An opportunity is provided for Council to again continue budget deliberations and then finalize a draft budget for the September 6th, 2023 first Public Hearing and September 20th, 2023 second and final Public Hearing.

At the last budget workshop, Council asked staff to bring back the value of the General Fund Reserve Account, the value of the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommended amount of two (2) months of reserves and the difference between the two (2) amounts as follows:

Two (2) months of General Fund reserves is approximately $4,196,508. Budgeted reserves are $5,609,663 (approximately 2.6 months). The difference is $1,413,155.

The proposed Budget has been updated based on current updates from the City's health and property insurers, Lake County Property Appraiser, and the State of Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) Department. Updates for miscellaneous items are also included (staff vacancies, changes in health insurance coverage, changes in dental insurance coverage, etc.). These updated adjustments to the draft Budget are included in the attached Exhibit A. They reflect additional revenues which could be appropriated as follows:

- *General Fund: $221,368. (Can be appropriated to reserves to reduce the amount coming from reserves from $360,803 to $139,435. It can also be appropriated for items on the cut list, or towards reducing the mileage rate by 0.1477 mills to 6.4473 mills).*

- *Infrastructure Sales Tax $522,797 (Can be appropriated to reserves or eligible capital cut/reduced items).*

After the Council deliberates and finalizes the budgets, the budgets will be brought back to Council along with supporting resolutions at the two upcoming Public Hearings in September for further public input and Council consideration.

<u>Mayor Price</u>

Mayor Price referred to page 293 – Community Redevelopment and asked why no intergovernmental revenue were reflected. Ms. Houghton said no Tourism Grant was in progress. If one was applied and granted, Staff would bring it back to the Council, and the Budget would be amended.

Mayor Price referred to page 296 – Community Redevelopment and inquired about a $10,000 bleacher expense. He asked why bleachers would be needed in the TIFF area. Mr. Tweedie said bleachers were used for special events on the waterfront. He said the current set was worn out and needed to be replaced. He said the bleachers were also used in other areas, such as ball fields. Mr. Tweedie said they were movable and 15 x 50 feet. Council Member Grenier noted that bleachers were used for five years at Rifles, Rails, and History and had come in handy.

Mayor Price referred to page 429 and inquired about an increase in audit expenses. Ms. Houghton said Finance budgets for audit services. Those services increased for a significant single audit with ARPA funds and the close-out of State Revolving Loan Funds. She said other grants would require single audits.

<u>Council Member Singer</u>

Council Member Singer said he was happy to lower the millage rate for the fifth year. He said it was the goal of the Council to have the recommended amount in the General Fund Reserves, and the City was at a healthy reserve level.

Council Member Singer said the Infrastructure Sales Tax included $522,000, and he understood the funds could only be used for capital projects over $5,000. Ms. Houghton confirmed $5,000 and a life-extending beyond five years. Council Member Singer asked if the funds were placed in reserves, would they be limited to Infrastructure Sales Tax Reserves and not General Fund Reserves. Ms. Houghton confirmed.

Council Member Singer asked if there would be a need to purchase right-of-way for gateway signage. Mr. Drury said the City would move forward with RFQ to hire an architectural firm to survey the west-end property, who would then determine if the gateway signs could be placed in the City's public right-of-way and devise a schematic design. It would come back before the Council at that time, and any needed right-of-way would be determined. He said if the Council would like to put a placeholder for half of the money, it would be enough to explore a gateway at the west end of Main Street.

Council Member Singer said he would like the funds used for the West End Main Street Gateway Sign, Slim Haywood lighting and sidewalks, and road paving.

Council Member Pfister

Council Member Pfister said she was concerned with security improvement cuts such as volleyball court security improvements. Mr. Drury said he believed the item was for added cameras to existing camera security. Mr. O'Keefe confirmed and said it was for additional closed-circuit television cameras to enhance security in various areas of the City. Mr. Drury noted the exempt nature of security information and said public discussion would need to be limited regarding security information such as locations. A discussion was held regarding the enhancement of security cameras.

Council Member Pfister asked if a lighting study was completed in the downtown. Mr. Drury said a lighting study was included as an ARPA-funded project. Mr. Dillon said Duke Energy would conduct the analysis.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to put $100,000 back into the budget for security cameras, and for staff to determine appropriate locations, seconded by Bob Grenier.

Ms. Houghton asked for the funding source. Mr. Drury said it would be Capital Infrastructure Sales Tax.

Council Member Singer asked if the remaining $221,000 unappropriated funds could be used for the gateway sign and Slim Haywood lighting. He asked which would be the better funding source for extra security. Mr. Drury said either funding source could be used, and the Staff would identify the most appropriate and sufficient funding sources. He asked which items the Council would like placed back into the budget.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Council Member Grenier

Council Member Grenier said Staff provided a transparent and well-balanced budget. He commended Mr. Drury and said the Staff was able to find ways, with a lower millage, to get more firefighters, reward staff, beautify the City, and build on a historic foundation. He said everything needed was included in the budget.

Council Member Grenier said the West Main Street is coming along beautifully and noted his support for a new gateway sign. He said he supported additional security and the West Main Street signage.

Vice Mayor Gamble

Vice Mayor Gamble noted his support for the signage at the west end of Main Street. He asked for the cost of a Drone Show for the 4th of July event.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted his concerns regarding spending funds on a portable office at the YMCA. He said the Old Train Station may be an alternate location to move the recreation department.

Mr. Drury said the City has a Horizon Team working on the project, including Council Member Pfister, Mr. Drury, and Mr. Aldrich. He said the Horizon Team worked on the entire regional park with the County Commissioners and Chairman Kirby Smith. He noted the importance of the City fulfilling its obligation under the agreement with Lake County, where the County was responsible for capital items and the City was responsible for operations. It is a large property and major undertaking, and a project that has never been done in the State: a partnership between the YMCA, Lake County, and the City of Tavares. No presence on the site when the City owns and is responsible for the property would be problematic for staff.

Mr. Aldrich provided a PowerPoint presentation and a high-level overview of the importance of Tavares maintaining an on-site presence at the regional park location. He noted the modular unit would provide a professional presence, could be moved to different locations, and the contractor would be responsible for moving the modular unit on site.

Council Member Pfister noted the site was a 25-acre recreation complex. The regional park was one of Tavares's biggest and best projects, and a modular building was a minimal investment for what the City was receiving.

Council Member Singer said the City needed a physical presence on the site.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he wished to ensure the City and County were on the same page and wanted to avoid placing a building on the site that may be in the way of their program. Council Member Pfister said the modular unit could eventually be moved to Woodlea.

Mayor Price said he concurred with Vice Mayor Gamble. He said he feels the funds should be spent on something other than a temporary office or $54,000 for a maintenance truck. He said those two items should be taken out of the budget. He said he did not think the City should purchase the St. Clair Abrams House for $250,000, and would like to add a $206,000 West Main Street Gateway signage feature to the budget. Mayor Price said he would like to further reduce the millage rate with saved money.

Council Member Grenier said he sees the modular building utilized at both locations: Woodlea and the YMCA.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to leave the purchase of the modular unit for $240,000 in the budget, seconded by Bob Grenier.

Vice Mayor Gamble asked for confirmation from Lake County Recreation that the modular building would be permissible and that they understand it would be temporary. Mr. Drury said he believed the modular building fell within the agreement to meet the City's obligation to maintain the County regional park.

The motion carried 3-2 as follows:

Walter Price:	**No**
Sandy Gamble:	**No**
Bob Grenier:	**Yes**
Lori Pfister:	**Yes**
Troy Singer:	**Yes**

Vice Mayor Gamble said he was concerned regarding the expenditure of City funds vs. what the County would fund and did not have an issue with Staff being on site. Mr. Drury said Staff would work on a process with the County to ensure they have no objections regarding requests in the future.

Council Member Singer said he did not fully support purchasing the St. Clair Abrams House or renovations. He said he would like the funds to go to other projects or to lower the millage rate.

Vice Mayor Gamble asked how much $250,000 would lower the millage rate. Ms. Houghton said the millage would be reduced by .1668 or $33.00 per year. Ms. Houghton confirmed she utilized a $250,000 valued home at the homestead rate.

Council Member Pfister said she would like more information on the historical importance of purchasing the home.

Mr. Drury asked Mr. Aldrich to provide a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Aldrich provided a PowerPoint image and a high-level overview of the project. Mr. Drury said the property had been vacant and boarded for at least 16 years. He noted the house was the home of Tavares' founding father.

Council Member Grenier said he sees the creativity and vision the home could provide the citizens of Tavares. He said St. Clair Abrams was a great visionary, and one action item of the citizens was to build on a historic foundation. He noted citizens and businesses work to preserve the history of Tavares in their homes and buildings and often visit the Historical Research Center to obtain information.

<u>**MOTION**</u>

Bob Grenier moved to leave Major St. Clair Abrams House in the budget, seconded by Lori Pfister.

Council Member Singer said Tavares had done a wonderful job building on its historical foundation and had difficulty supporting the City taking on the project after the recent expansion of the library and museum.

Council Member Grenier noted the America in Bloom representatives come to the City and discuss celebrating Heritage. He said Heritage was one of their award criteria, and the representatives love Tavares's small-town charm and history.

The motion carried 3-2 as follows:

Walter Price:	**No**
Sandy Gamble:	**Yes**
Bob Grenier:	**Yes**
Lori Pfister:	**Yes**
Troy Singer:	**No**

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to put the West Main Street Gateway Sign in the budget, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to put the Slim Haywood sidewalk and lighting in the budget, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Mr. Drury said the Staff would make the discussed adjustments for the September Public Hearings. He thanked the Council for their continued deliberation and great questions.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

Council Member Grenier inquired about he status of a Tavares documentary. Mr. Drury said a pilot documentary was completed with each Council member interviewed. He said if the Council wished to move forward with the documentary, they would need to ask staff to return the funds to the budget. He said a full documentary would include the Council, business community, faith community, and Tavares stakeholders. The documentary would go to local PBS stations for airing.

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

Tab 9. Golf Cart Crossing Request

Vice Mayor Gamble said he was asked to consider placing a golf cart crossing at US 441 and Advent Health Hospital. Council Member Pfister said a golf cart crossing at the location had been in discussion since March 2023. Mr. Drury noted Secretary Purdue moved up from District 5, and Secretary Taylor was now in place. Staff would proceed with the request, and Council Member Pfister would review a letter and make the formal application within the next few weeks. He said Staff would keep the Council updated on the progress of the request.

Vice Mayor Gamble said the City may need to review the Golf Cart ordinance compared to state law. Mr. Drury said the Staff would bring back an updated ordinance for the Council's consideration. Vice Mayor Gamble noted that the maximum speed should be updated.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he appreciated Council Member Pfister's efforts.

XIV. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

XV. REPORTS

Tab 10. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury said the Budget Public Hearings would be held at 5:05 p.m. on September 6, 2023, and September 20, 2023. The meetings would begin with general business at 4:00 p.m., pausing at 5:05 for the budget hearings.

Ms. Novack noted the election qualifying period closed on November 15, 2023, at 12:00 noon. She provided names of the qualified candidates for the November 2023 election for Tavares City Council Seat 2 and Seat 4.

Ms. Novack congratulated Council Member Pfister on the birth of her new grandchild. Council Member Pfister said her grandchild was born during the meeting at 4:13 p.m.

Mr. Aldrich noted September is Library Card Month. Ms. Campbell provided library card sleeves to the Council.

Tab 11. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Singer said he was happy to be a part of a wonderful Team. He said the Council has the same goal in having the best interest of the residents and business owners. He commended the Council on their budget discussions.

Vice Mayor Gamble said the Council works well together.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he would like an update on ARPA-funded projects to appropriate unused funds. Mr. Drury said the Staff would bring back that information.

The Council and Department Directors congratulated Council Member Pfister on the birth of her grandchild.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:59 p.m.

Respectfully,

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Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk