



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 2, 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 - *Absent*
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. Pastor Mike Watkins, Friendship C.M.E. Church

Pastor Michael Watkins, Friendship C.M.E. Church, 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 he would like to add an item under New Business; Tab 6a – Florida League of Cities Annual Conference Attendance.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Agenda with the change [addition of Tab 6a], seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

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 said there were no ordinances or resolutions before the Council for consideration.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 2. Approval of the July 19, 2023, City Council Meeting and Budget Workshop Minutes], seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 2. Approval of the July 19, 2023, City Council Meeting and Budget Workshop Minutes

Approved under the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 3. Recreation and Library Services Summer Programs Update

Recreation Manager Pete Sherard and Tavares Library Director Rebecca Campbell provided PowerPoint Presentations and high-level updates on the following programs:

The Tavares Public Library hosted various youth and adult programs this summer for the community. Highlighted programs/events included:

- Summer Reading Program
- Summer Concert Series
- Travel Talk
- Tourist in Your Own Town
- Coffee and a Chat

The City of Tavares Recreation Department added to the summer fun with the following highlighted programs:

- Camp Ascend
- Tavares Youth Basketball Camp
- Tavares Babe Ruth All-Stars
- NFL Youth Flag Football
- Start Smart Flag Football
- "Take a Hike" Program

Vice Mayor Gamble noted that Tavares Elementary and Pinecrest Academy conducted summer reading programs and asked Ms. Campbell if the Library was coordinating with the schools to solve potential overcrowding issues. He asked if there was a maximum number of participants. Ms. Campbell said there was no maximum number of attendees, and accommodations were made for all who wished to attend. She noted the Tavares Library works closely with summer camps.

Mayor Price thanked Mr. Sherard and Ms. Campbell.

Council Member Singer said he receives only positive feedback from those participating in the programs. He said the staff did an excellent job with community outreach and thanked Mr. Sherard and Ms. Campbell for their efforts. He asked if there were future programs that could be expanded. Mr. Sherard said the Recreation Department's goal

and objective was to expand current programs and noted the department planned to develop a soccer program with the addition of the YMCA property. He said the department wishes to ensure quality programs are maintained. Ms. Campbell noted Love Extension was a new program, and a knitting group program moved from bi-weekly to once a week. She said the Library staff was in discussion for the following summer's themes. She said the Library also seeks to increase circulation of the library collection.

Council Member Grenier noted librarians are the one group that works with citizens every moment of their day. He said he received positive comments from the patrons that were a tribute to the staff. He thanked the Library staff for their efforts and enjoyed attending the summer programs.

Tab 4. Tavares Professional Firefighters Local 3245 Collective Bargaining Agreement

Chief Keith made the following presentation:

Representatives of management and the union met on several occasions for collective bargaining sessions. City Council member / Mayor Walter Price, City Administrator John Drury, and Fire Chief Richard Keith served as the negotiating team representing the City. Local 3245 President Mike Kelley and Mr. Carsten Kieffer represented the Union. City Finance Director Lori Houghton and Human Resources Director Crissy Bublitz attended and added their expertise to all bargaining sessions.

Mike Kelley has authorization from the members of the Union Local to sign the proposed contract on behalf of the Union.

Proposed changes to the contract are indicated by strikethrough (~~example~~) for deleted language, and underlined (example) for new language.

The salient points of this proposed contract are:

- In Article 33, bargaining unit members agree to the same cost of living adjustment proposed for other city employees.*
- In Article 33, the minimum annual starting salary rates are increased by 7.5% for all personnel positions, recognized and covered by this Collective Bargaining Agreement.*
- In order to address the compression issues created by the increase in the annual starting salary rates, six (6) employees shall receive adjustments to bring them into their specific, amended salary range.*
- The Paramedic incentive is raised from the current \$3.00 per hour to a proposed \$3.75 per hour for all (10) (Paramedics).*

- *In Article 33, bargaining unit members agree to participate in the health insurance plan, including cost adjustments, consistent with the plan adjustments proposed for other city employees.*

This contract renewal is proposed to become effective on October 1, 2023, with an effective period of one year.

Staff recommends the Council move to approve Option 1: Move to approve the proposed Collective Bargaining Agreement as presented, between the Tavares Professional Firefighters Local 3245 and the City of Tavares, authorizing City Administrator John Drury to execute the contract on behalf of the City.

Mayor Price noted he was a part of the negotiation Team, and the firefighters asked for nothing unreasonable.

Vice Mayor Gamble thanked Mayor Price for representing the City Council on the negotiations Team. He also thanked Mr. Drury, Chief Keith, and all other staff members involved in the negotiations. Vice Mayor Gamble asked if the adjustment to the starting salary would impact the remainder of the department staff in the future. Chief Keith said the increase immediately affects six individuals, effective October 1, 2023. He said all other firefighters are above the starting salary range, and there would be no impact. Mr. Drury said there were compression issues in the past that were addressed, and a study identified six employees needing an adjustment. Vice Mayor Gamble thanked the team for addressing the issue.

Council Member Singer thanked Mayor Price for serving on the negotiations team. He said the Council made every effort to take care of all employees. Council Member Singer asked for fiscal impact. Mr. Drury said \$22,040.97. Mr. Drury said the amount was not included in the draft budget before the Council and would be brought back in the final budget along with all adjustments made throughout the budget workshop discussions. He said it is anticipated through the state revenue forecasts that the cost would not impact the budget before the Council.

Council Member Grenier thanked the Mayor for serving on the negotiations team.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve Option 1, seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 5. Meter Base Read Program

Mr. Clark provided an update on the Meter Base Read Program including the following highlights:

- 2016 – Finance and Utility Departments worked together to determine feasibility

- 2017 – Finance and Utility Departments mapped a time and financial plan for the project
- Utility Department met with the meter supplier and developed a plan
- Planned and mapped locations after a radio study was completed
- Influencers and Team included Citizens, City Council, City Administrator, Finance Director, Finance Manager, Finance Customer Service Team, Community Development, Utilities, and Neptune/Sunstate
- Current locations include the following:
 - 2017-2018 – Gateway and Antenna at Royal Harbor
 - 2018-2019 – Fred Stover Field
 - 2019-2020 – Lift Station 61
 - 2020-2021 – Lift Station 33
 - 2021-2022 – Lift Station 65 and Fire Station 2
 - 2022-2023 – Lift Station 6 and Woodlea Road rib site
- Future locations include the following:
 - 2023-2024 – Ingraham Water Tower
 - 2024-2025 – Cellular meters installed for remote locations (Deer Island)
- 13,000 Active Meters
- 4992 Current Base Read (38%)
- Current Expenditures \$700,000
- Benefits include reduced cost, reduced labor, better customer service with leak notification and high consumption flags, ability to remote data log, payback, no driving throughout the city to obtain readings

Vice Mayor Gamble said the Meter Base Program was phenomenal and provided quick notification to citizens regarding leaks or problem meters.

Mayor Price thanked Mr. Clark for the update.

X1. BUDGET WORKSHOP

Tab 6. Budget Workshop – Present Enterprise and Special Revenue Fund Budgets, and Discuss the General Fund Budget

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

Previously, at the July 19th City Council meeting, Council was presented the General Fund budget, and staff will now deliver the Utility Fund and Special Revenue Fund Proposed Budgets for FY 2023 after which an opportunity will be provided to discuss the previously delivered General Fund budget as well as the Utilities and Special Fund budgets.

The Utility Funds include: Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Solid Waste, and the Seaplane Base/Marina. Special Funds include Community Redevelopment (TIF), Infrastructure Sales Tax, Grants, Debt Service, and the Pavilion Fund.

The maximum tentative millage was discussed and set at 6.5950 mills (a decrease from the prior year) at the July 19th City Council meeting. The Five-Year Capital Plan will be delivered, presented and discussed at the August 16, 2023 budget workshop, followed by two Public Hearings on the budget on September 6, 2023 and September 20, 2023.

Ms. Houghton provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Enterprise and Special Funds.

Mayor Price asked for questions from the Council.

Vice Mayor Gamble

Vice Mayor Gamble inquired about the 2003 single-axel truck being replaced in Solid Waste for \$334,000. Mr. Dillon confirmed the purchase was for a garbage truck by a state contract.

Vice Mayor Gamble wished to ensure the City was careful to refrain from funding items or projects Lake County would fund. Mr. Drury said Lake County agreed to complete large capital items, including buildings. The City would be focused on operation capital items for maintenance and administration. Vice Mayor Gamble inquired about County support for the maintenance barn and portable. Mr. Drury said staff could ask Lake County if they would participate. Mr. Drury said the portable office building would be brought in for a few years while the County completes the capital plan. The administration would move out of the portable when the County completed its buildings and sold. Vice Mayor Gamble said he would like an agreement that the County would reimburse the City if Stover Field funds are used toward capital items. Mr. Drury said staff would see if an MOU agreement could be made to clarify funding.

Vice Mayor Gamble referred to the cut list and said he would like the West End gateway sign to be placed back into the budget at \$206,000.

Council Member Singer

Council Member Singer noted there were \$21 million dollars on the cut list, and it would be nice to place many items back into the budget. He said the City was slowly progressing on the West End Main Street project, and there were other areas to fund that the City had been working on for years. Council Member Singer noted additional items on the cut list, including a study for St. Clair Abrams Avenue beatification, Police Department radios, ADA sidewalk ramps, et al. He said there was only a set amount of money to work with, and the main goal was to care for employees, keep the millage rate as low as possible, and raise reserves. He said he was happy with the budget.

Mayor Price

Mayor Price inquired about the reusable operating and maintenance center for \$240,000. Mr. Aldrich said the expenditure was for portable office space needed immediately since the City took over services at the YMCA regional park for mowing grass and maintaining future pickleball courts. He said the recreation staff would use the office space temporarily until the county project was completed. Mayor Price asked if the existing office would work. Mr. Drury said the current offices in a house on St. Clair Abrams were planned to be used as additional parking, and the recreation department would be based at the YMCA regional park location.

Mayor Price inquired about replacing a Splash Park toilet for \$5,000. Mr. Tweedie said it was not for one fixture but for all.

Mayor Price asked what would be involved in City Hall mitigation for \$75,000. Ms. Houghton said that was for an additional emergency exit in the finance department area.

Mayor Price said there were significant increases in contract services. He asked why those services increased so much in one year. Mr. Drury asked which specific contract service.

Mayor Prices referred to page 99 under General Government. He said one contractual service increased by \$53,000. Mr. Drury said the Finance Department would research and provide information to the Council.

Mayor Price inquired about a contractual service in the Community Development Department for \$437,000. Ms. Houghton said the Building Department's contractual services are for inspection services that react to the market. If they are not needed, the funds are not spent. The cost would be offset directly by building permit fees which could not be used for anything except building service and safety-type measures enforcing the City building codes. Ms. Houghton said she would provide information and noted several items purchased during the Covid pandemic, including the software membership and licenses for a set number of years that the City is now responsible.

Mayor Price noted an increase in election expenses from \$2,000 the previous year to \$37,000. Ms. Novack said 2023 is a municipal stand-alone election, and the cost included a quote from the Lake County Supervisor of Elections and advertising expenses.

Mayor Price referred to cemetery maintenance costs at \$34,000 on page 261. He asked for the difference between Sexton services and cemetery maintenance. Mr. Dillon said the City decided to contract maintenance services four years prior because the Sexton could not handle 20 acres of mowing, edging, cleaning, and maintaining property upkeep and doing the Sexton functions such as burial plots and meeting with citizens. The contracted cost has been stable for the past four years.

Mayor Price said the City was subsidizing the Pavilion on the Lake for \$400,000 out of the General Fund and may be at a point where a Horizon Team or committee to look at alternative uses for the facility. Mr. Drury asked Ms. Houghton how much was for debt service. Ms. Houghton said the debt service was \$198,000. Mr. Drury said a Horizon Team could be implemented to review the current business plan. He said hosting a wedding facility had a substantial economic impact downtown and throughout the City. Mr. Drury noted the wedding facility supports downtown restaurants, hotels, flower shops, hair and makeup studios, wedding planners, and photographers. He said Staff could bring back the economic impact to the downtown businesses, what it would be like if the wedding facility was removed, and the effect on the business community. Mayor Price said he understands the economic impact and wished there was some way to absorb some of the subsidies. Mr. Drury said the facility was used for many public agency meetings for the City, Lake County, and the Lake County Constitutional Officers and served as valid public use.

Council Member Grenier

Council Member Grenier said Mr. Drury provided a balanced budget, and it is wonderful to have the millage rate lowered for the past five years. He noted specific projects had to be created to create a city where people wanted to come to live, work, and play. Council Member Grenier said today's success was because of what was accomplished, and costs were increasing due to inflation. He thanked the Staff for providing a balanced budget, said the West End Main Street paving looked great, and hoped the City could continue improving. He noted his support for the budget.

Mayor Price said the budget was very detailed and transparent.

Vice Mayor Gamble inquired about the City's Reserves. Mr. Drury said two months' Reserves are required, and the City had close to three months in Reserves. Vice Mayor Gamble asked how much money the overage would equate to. Mr. Drury said that amount could be brought back to the Council. Vice Mayor Gamble said he would suggest not moving forward with a portable building at the YMCA and noted a concern that the portable would be in the way of the County's construction project. Mr. Drury said Staff could provide a presentation on why it is most efficient to have the mowing equipment and Staff on site. Vice Mayor Gamble asked if the YMCA facility could house staff members who need to be on-site and would like to save money and utilize the funds in a more beneficial area. Mr. Drury said Staff would bring it back to the Council when there would be an opportunity to vote on items.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

Tab 6a. Florida League of Cities Annual Conference Attendance

Mr. Drury stated the annual Florida League of Cities conference was scheduled for August 10 through 12, 2023. He noted Mayor Price could not attend due to scheduling conflicts and asked if any Council members wished to attend on his behalf. He said he would be happy to represent the City if needed.

Council Member Singer said it was important for the City to be represented at the conference. He said he had some availability.

Discussion was held, and Mr. Drury said he would work with Council Member Singer to cover the conference.

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

XIV. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Michael Watkins, 805 Summerral Avenue, Tavares, noted the Tavares Police Department, Lake County Sheriff's Office, and Friendship C.M.E. Church conducted a backpack giveaway. He said Tavares High School Principal Stein opened the gym, and on Saturday, August 29, 2023, over 200 backpacks filled with school supplies were given out to children in the community. He commended the Tavares Library and the Tavares Police Department for their efforts in the event.

Mr. Watkins said the Tavares Library would host an upcoming B.E.T.T.E.R. meeting on August 22, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Watkins noted his support for continued West End Main Street project upgrades.

Santoro, Royal Harbor, Tavares, said Ms. Houghton provided an excellent Budget presentation and noted his support for the presented budget. He thanked the Council for a job well done on continuing to move the City forward and supporting staff.

XV. REPORTS

Tab 7. City Administrator Report

Mr. Fabre noted City Planner Terri O'Neal would begin her tenure with the City the following week. He said she previously worked for the City of Wildwood, was knowledgeable, and would complement the Planning and Zoning Team and Department.

Attorney Holt said Ms. O'Neal would be a great addition to the City.

Tab 8. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Grenier said he toured the new Public Works facility site, and the project was moving forward rapidly.

Council Member Singer commended Ms. Houghton for her budget presentation and for providing a transparent budget. He said the Council provides their guidance, and the staff does a great job putting the budget together for several months.

Vice Mayor Gamble thanked Ms. Houghton for the Budget presentation.

Vice Mayor Gamble asked for an update on Splash Park repairs. Mr. Dillon said the seaplane structural columns were sent to the manufacturer, and new material was being ordered. He said it was anticipated Wooton Park would be open at the end of August. Mr. Drury noted that Splash Park would reopen in the 2024 season.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted the City presented two referendums to the citizens in the past to extend terms to four years which failed. He said it is costly to the City to run odd-year elections and noted Council members could be recalled by petition if citizens were unhappy with their representatives.

The Council wished Mr. O'Keefe a happy birthday.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:48.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk