



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 20, 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. Pastor Brooks Braswell, Umatilla Baptist Church

Pastor Brooks Braswell, Umatilla Baptist 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 the staff had no changes.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. Proclamation – Taiwan’s 112th National Day

Mayor Price read a Proclamation in its entirety in observance of the 112th National Day of the Republic of China (Taiwan) on October 10, 2023.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Council Member Grenier asked if the Taipei Economic & Cultural Office (TECO) knew the City was issuing a Proclamation. Mr. Drury confirmed and said the City would forward the Proclamation to TECO in Miami. Council Member Grenier said the Tavares Research Center maintained information on Tavares Sister City New Taipei and noted his support.

Tab 3. Proclamation – Customer Service Week

Mayor Price read a Proclamation in its entirety proclaiming October 2 through 6, 2023, as Customer Service Week in the City of Tavares.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Ms. Houghton introduced the Finance Department's Customer Service Team Members: Customer Service Assistant Nate Turner, Customer Service Assistant II Steve Rogers, Customer Service Clerk Isabel Cirilo, Customer Service Clerk Alexis Prevatt, and Finance Manager Briana Stack. Ms. Houghton thanked the Council, City Administrator, and Staff for their support.

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

Attorney Holt stated there were no quasi-judicial matters before the Council.

VI. READING OF ALL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS INTO THE RECORD

Ms. Novack read the following Resolution by title only:

RESOLUTION 2023-20

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT AMENDMENT TO THE LAKE COUNTY FLORIDA AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT AGREEMENT FOR THE TAVARES WOOTON WONDERLAND PROJECT

Ms. Novack stated Millage and Budget Resolutions 2023-16 and 2023-17, at second reading, would be read into the record in their entirety during the Budget Hearing at 5:05 p.m.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if anyone wished to pull an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion. There were none.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 4. Approval of the September 6, 2023, City Council Meeting and Public Hearing Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 5. Resolution 2023-20 – Community Development Subrecipient Grant Amendment for the Wooton Wonderland Project

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

On May 5, 2021, the City Council authorized acceptance of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the demolition, design, and construction of an ADA accessible park (Wooton Wonderland project). The terms of the grant agreement included a stipulation that the project shall be completed within 24 months of the execution of the agreement.

Additional time is needed to complete and close-out the project and both parties wish to extend the term of the agreement for an additional year. Resolution 2023-20 provides authorization for the City Administrator to execute a grant amendment to extend the term of the agreement for an additional year.

Staff recommends Option 1, for Council to approve resolution 2023-20 authorizing the City Administrator to execute a grant amendment to extend the term of the CDBG Wooton Wonderland grant agreement by one year.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council. There were none.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Option 1 [Approval of Resolution 2023-20 authorizing the City Administrator to execute a grant amendment to extend the term of the CDBG Wooton Wonderland grant agreement by one year], seconded by Bob Grenier.

Council Member Singer noted his support as both parties agreed to the amendment, and the City would lose a \$146,000 grant if denied.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 6. Wooton Wonderland Storyboard Narrative

Mr. Dillon made the following presentation:

On June 7th, City Staff presented the new Wooton Wonderland Storyboard design and narrative for Council's approval. At that time, City Council requested staff to work with Councilmember Grenier to consolidate the proposed narrative and bring back the edited narrative for Council's consideration.

Proposed Storyboard Narrative:

Tavares is a city shaped by those with vision, innovation, and a compelling sense of adventure. Major Alexander St. Clair-Abrams, an attorney, newspaper editor, and railroad entrepreneur from New Orleans, founded Tavares in 1880. He quickly built Tavares into a center of commerce with railroads, mills, factories,

stores, restaurants, and an exquisite world-renowned hotel.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, and the birth of aviation, Tony Jannus, the world's first licensed commercial airline pilot, recorded the first seaplane landing in Tavares on February 23, 1914, on Lake Eustis in his Benoist XIV biplane flying boat. Thirty days later, a Thomas flying boat, piloted by Walter Johnson, recorded the second seaplane flight on Lake Eustis. Johnson was accompanied by passenger, Clara Adams, on her inaugural airplane voyage. Clara became known as the "Maiden of Maiden Voyages," having accumulated more than 150,000 miles of maiden aircraft voyages. Ninety-five years after these achievements were recorded in the annals of history, Tavares built upon the foundation of these remarkable accomplishments and took flight as "America's Seaplane City®."

Wooton Park, located on Lake Dora, originated as a gift from Jeanette and Floyd Wooton, who donated the land to the city in 1948 to be used as a public park. Through the years, Tavares has acquired additional waterfront property adjoining Wooton Park. This scenic landscape along picturesque Lake Dora is called Pontoon Promenade, which, along with Wooton Park, is the heartbeat of Tavares.

Wooton Park has gone through many improvements in its history, which included two major projects undertaken by the Tavares Junior Woman's Club. In 1975, they spearheaded the construction of new boat docks, gazebos, lamp posts, outdoor furnishings, landscaping, and playground equipment. In 1991, they collaborated with various community organizations to form an all-volunteer group called Playground Partners to help raise funds and build a playground initially called All Children's Park. A contest was held to name the new play area. A fifth-grade student from Tavares Elementary School, Ali Richardson, won the contest with her imaginative entry - Wooton Wonderland.

As Tavares continued its acclaimed transformation into America's Seaplane City, Wooton Wonderland continued to be a popular attraction for families. In 2018, a decision was made to replace the beloved playground, which showed definitive signs of deterioration. The new Wooton Wonderland would be designed to meet current ADA standards, foster an inclusive play environment, and appeal to a multi-generational audience. The Lake County Board of County Commissioners awarded a Community Development Block Grant to provide Tavares with the funding necessary to develop and construct the second iteration of Wooton Wonderland.

On July 5, 2022, after more than thirty years, the original Wooton Wonderland was played upon for the last time.

One year later, in July 2023, a new state of the art playground opened, which embraced the spirit of adventure in all of us!

Imagine, Experience, and Soar at your new Wooton Wonderland!

Staff recommends approval of Option 1, for Council to approve the Wooton Wonderland Storyboard Narrative.

Mayor Price asked Council Member Grenier if he approved the Wooton Wonderland storyboard narrative.

Council Member Grenier said he acted as editor, commended staff on their efforts, and noted his support.

Council Member Singer thanked Mr. Dillon and his Team for putting the Wooton Wonderland narrative together and Council Member Grenier for his edits. Council Member Singer asked about the historical context of including the Pontoon Promenade along Wooton Park as it was not part of the Wooton Wonderland story and the narrative regarding All Children's Park, a potential name for Wooton Wonderland.

Council Member Grenier said what happened ten minutes ago became history in the context of writing about history. He said the name All Children's Park was inclusive and a significant part of the park's history.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve Option 1 [Wooton Wonderland storyboard narrative as presented], seconded by Bob Grenier.

A discussion was held regarding signage options. Mr. Drury said Option 1 was selected for the signage, and before the Council was the approval of the narrative.

Council Member Singer thanked Council Member Grenier for explaining the historical value of his verbiage concerns.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 7. Annual Citizen Donation Program Report

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

On December 7, 2022, the City Council approved a Citizen Donation Program for donors who wish to make smaller donations in honor of loved ones. For \$250, a Donor can donate to a Department Program and receive a brick inlaid in the City with the honored person's name or a nameplate on a wall of appreciation. Certificates of appreciation are also provided to the donors. Please see the attached Citizen Donation Program form.

Part of the program is having each donor's name read into the record at a City Council meeting by the City Administrator once a year. The following donations were made in the fiscal year 2022-2023:

- *Carolyn Cox, in honor of Randy Cox, donated to the Tavares Youth Recreation Scholarship Program.*
- *Misty Spadofora, in honor of Reed Haynes, donated to the Tavares Youth Recreation Scholarship Program.*
- *My First Coffee House made a general donation to the Tavares Library Book Drive.*

XII. NEW BUSINESS

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

XIV. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Vance Jochim, 12619 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake County, said he walks through the Tavares Nature Park several times a week and has to wear boots as mud puddles, foliage, and the boardwalk were not being maintained.

XV. REPORTS

Tab 10. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury noted the tilt wall was raised for the new Public Works facility. He said it was a great project and thanked Mr. Dillon for taking the leadership role to move it forward.

Mr. Dillon thanked those who attended the raising of the tilt wall at the new Public Works facility. He said all buildings would be erected by the end of the following week.

Chief Keith noted several Council Members attended the 9/11 remembrance memorial event at the Lake County Historic Courthouse. He said Mayor Price represented the City, and thanked those who attended. Chief Keith said the event was meaningful as youth not born during the 9/11 attacks read the names of some of the victims, building their history and legacy in a promise never to forget.

Ms. Houghton thanked the Mayor and City Council for approving the Customer Service Week Proclamation.

Tab 11. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Pfister noted she had a previous engagement and was sorry to miss the tilt wall raising, and enjoyed seeing pictures of the event.

Council Member Pfister said she was excited to see so much activity and children at Wooton Park. She thanked those who had a hand in completing the project.

Council Member Grenier said he enjoyed the tilt wall raising event and noted many pictures and information on the tilt wall raising and Public Works facility would be placed at the Tavares Research Center.

Council Member Grenier thanked Chief Keith for attending the 9/11 Tavares Library event. He said the speaker had a collection at the 9/11 museum in New York.

Council Member Singer said attending the 9/11 remembrance memorial ceremony in the Lake County Historical Courthouse was an honor. He thanked the Mayor for his presentation and commended Captain Willis for emceeding the event.

Council Member Singer said he had the honor of attending the recent Tavares Chamber of Commerce Gala and congratulated those businesses who won awards.

Council Member Singer said he enjoyed the tilt-wall-raising event. He said the project is moving forward and looked forward to completion. He thanked Mr. Dillon for spearheading the project.

Vice Mayor Gamble said Captain Willis did a great job emceeding the 9/11 remembrance memorial ceremony at the Lake County Historic Courthouse.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he enjoyed the tilt wall raising event. He said the building was almost completed when he drove by the site prior to the Council meeting.

Vice Mayor Gamble said Tavares High School held their homecoming parade on Monday, September 18, 2023. He appreciated the City's assistance in providing safety.

Mayor Price said it was an honor to speak on behalf of the City at the Patriots Day remembrance event at the Lake County Historic Courthouse. He said Captain Willis did a great job emceeding the event.

Mayor Price said he attended the Tavares High School homecoming parade and enjoyed the 6:00 p.m. parade time rather than 12:00 p.m. so more people could attend.

Mayor Price said he enjoyed the tilt wall raising event. He thanked Mr. Dillon for his hard work.

Mayor Price adjourned the City Council regular meeting at 4:40 p.m. He noted the Public Hearing for the Tentative Millage and Budget would be held at 5:05 p.m.

Mayor Price called the Budget Hearing to order at 5:05 p.m.

**XI. BUDGET HEARING – FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 MILLAGE & BUDGET –
READING OF FINAL MILLAGE & BUDGET RESOLUTIONS – 5:05 P.M.**

Tab 8. Approve Resolution 2023-16 to Adopt the Final Millage Rate for FY 2024 – Second Reading

Ms. Novack read Resolution 2023-16 in its entirety as follows:

RESOLUTION 2023 - 16

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A FINAL MILLAGE RATE OF 6.5950 FOR THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, FOR AD VALOREM TAXES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024; SETTING FORTH THE PERCENT BY WHICH THE MILLAGE RATE IS GREATER THAN THE "ROLLED-BACK" RATE.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA:

WHEREAS, the City of Tavares of Lake County, Florida on September 6, 2023, adopted the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year Tentative Millage Rate following a public hearing as required by Florida Statute 200.065.

WHEREAS, the City of Tavares of Lake County, Florida, following due public notice as required by law, held a second public hearing on September 20, 2023, as required by Florida Statute 200.065 on the 2023-2024 Millage Rate; and

WHEREAS, the gross taxable value for operating purposes not exempt from taxation within Lake County has been certified by the County Property Appraiser to the City of Tavares as \$1,498,440,782.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Tavares of Lake County, Florida, that:

- 1. The City of Tavares Fiscal Year 2023-2024 operating millage rate to be levied is hereby set at 6.5950 mills, which millage rate is greater than the rolled back rate of 6.1590 mills by 7.08%.**
- 2. The voted debt service millage rate is set at .1817 mills for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.**
- 3. This Resolution will take effect immediately upon its adoption.**

PASSED AND RESOLVED this 20th day of September 2023 by the City Council of the City of Tavares, Florida.

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The City Administrator and staff have developed a budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for Council's consideration, totaling \$61,779,146 that is fully balanced. The proposed budget for FY 2024 includes, among many other items, the following:

- 1. Similar level of Service.*

2. *Decreased the General Fund millage rate for the 5th year in a row from 6.6590 to 6.5950 (which is 7.08% above the rollbacked rate).*
3. *Debt Service millage rate decreased (from .2074 to .1817).*
4. *Estimated reserve balances that meet GFOA recommendations.*
5. *Fire Assessment level funded (no rate increase).*
6. *Employee raises of 6.0%.*
7. *Two new part-time Police Officer reserves, and three new SAFER grant funded Firefighter/Paramedics.*
8. *Street paving \$250,000.*
9. *Expanded programs are cut.*

Previously, the City Council discussed the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget at the following public meetings:

- *7/19/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (General Fund Budget)*
- *7/19/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (Set Maximum Tentative Millage rate)*
- *8/02/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (General, Utility, and Special Revenue Fund Budgets)*
- *8/16/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (Capital Improvement Plan Presentation)*
- *8/16/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (Discussion on FY 2024 Proposed Budget)*

A Tentative Budget (all funds) has been prepared for the City Council. During the August 16, 2023 Budget Workshop, City Council voted to add the following items to the proposed budget:

1. *CCTV Security Improvements - \$100,000.*
2. *West Main Street Gateway Feature - \$206,500.*
3. *Design and Construct Sidewalks and Street Lights Along the Southern Part of Slim Haywood Road - \$125,000.*

All three items were added to the Infrastructure Sales Tax fund budget by utilizing updated State revenue estimates for Infrastructure Sales Tax revenue.

At the September 6, 2023, Public Hearing, the City Council voted to increase paving in the Infrastructure Sales Tax Fund by \$91,297 from \$250,000 to \$331,500.

At the September 6, 2023 Public Hearing, the City Council approved Resolution 2023-16 on First Reading with the above change to the Infrastructure Sales Tax Fund.

This hearing represents the Final Public Hearing to adopt the FY 2024 Millage

Rate and the FY 2024 Operating Budget. With Resolution 2023-16, the City Council will consider adoption of the Final Millage Rate for Fiscal Year 2024.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council. There were none.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the audience.

Vance Jochim, 12619 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake County, said he lived in unincorporated Lake County and was bothered by constant bragging about reducing the millage rate when there was nothing in the staff report regarding the Lake County valuation rate and taxes from their Save Our Homes policy.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve Resolution 2023-16, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0 at 5:14 p.m.

Tab 9. Approve Resolution 2023-17 to Adopt the Final Budget for FY 2024 – Second Reading

Ms. Novack read Resolution 2023-17 in its entirety as follows:

RESOLUTION 2023-17

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE FINAL BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2023 - 2024.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA:

WHEREAS, a public hearing on the tentative 2023-2024 budget was held at the Tavares City Hall Council Chambers in the City of Tavares, Florida, Lake County, Florida on Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 5:05 p.m., as required by Florida Statutes 200.065; and

WHEREAS, the general public was given an opportunity to express its views pertaining to the tentative budget, and

WHEREAS, the City Council approved the tentative budget for 2023-2024, and

WHEREAS, a second public hearing on the proposed 2023-2024 budget was held in the Council Chambers at the Tavares City Hall, 201 East Main Street in the City of Tavares, Florida, on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 5:05 p.m.,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Budget for 2023-2024 fiscal year for the City of Tavares, Florida is hereby adopted by the Tavares City Council in the amount of \$61,779,146 at public hearing this 20th day of September, 2023.

This resolution will take effect immediately upon its adoption.

PASSED AND RESOLVED this 20th day of September, 2023, by the City Council of the City of Tavares, Florida.

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The City Administrator and staff have developed a budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for Council's consideration, totaling \$61,779,146 that is fully balanced. The proposed budget for FY 2024 includes, among many other items, the following:

- 10. Similar level of Service.*
- 11. Decreased the General Fund millage rate for the 5th year in a row from 6.6590 to 6.5950 (which is 7.08% above the rollbacked rate).*
- 12. Debt Service millage rate decreased (from .2074 to .1817).*
- 13. Estimated reserve balances that meet GFOA recommendations.*
- 14. Fire Assessment level funded (no rate increase).*
- 15. Employee raises of 6.0%.*
- 16. Two new part-time Police Officer reserves, and three new SAFER grant funded Firefighter/Paramedics.*
- 17. Street paving \$250,000.*
- 18. Expanded programs are cut.*

Previously, the City Council discussed the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget at the following public meetings:

- 7/19/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (General Fund Budget)*
- 7/19/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (Set Maximum Tentative Millage rate)*
- 8/02/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (General, Utility, and Special Revenue Fund Budgets)*
- 8/16/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (Capital Improvement Plan Presentation)*
- 8/16/2023 – City Council Budget Workshop – (Discussion on FY 2024 Proposed Budget)*

A Tentative Budget (all funds) has been prepared for the City Council. During the August 16, 2023 Budget Workshop, City Council voted to add the following items to the proposed budget:

- 4. CCTV Security Improvements - \$100,000.*
- 5. West Main Street Gateway Feature - \$206,500.*
- 6. Design and Construct Sidewalks and Street Lights Along the Southern Part of Slim Haywood Road - \$125,000.*

All three items were added to the Infrastructure Sales Tax fund budget by utilizing updated State revenue estimates for Infrastructure Sales Tax revenue.

At the September 6, 2023, Public Hearing, the City Council voted to increase paving in the Infrastructure Sales Tax Fund by \$91,297 from \$250,000 to \$331,500.

This hearing represents the Final Public Hearing to adopt the FY 2024 Millage Rate and the FY 2024 Operating Budget. With Resolution 2023-17, the City Council will consider adoption of the Final Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2024. .

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council. There were none.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the audience.

Vance Jochim, 12619 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake County, suggested that a way to cut the meeting short would be for staff to ask the Board to waive the reading of Resolutions.

Council Member Singer thanked Mr. Drury, Ms. Houghton, and the Finance Team for presenting a great budget. He said the Council tried to do its best for all Tavares citizens and business owners. Council Member Singer said the Council represented over 20,000 residents, and no residents came to the Council with a negative comment on the budget. He said the Council must be doing something good.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve Resolution 2023-17, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0 at 5:20 p.m.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk