



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 17, 2024 – 4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 EAST MAIN STREET, TAVARES**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

**Bob Grenier, Mayor
Sandy Gamble, Vice Mayor
Lori Pfister, Council Member
Walter Price, 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 Grenier 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.

Mayor Grenier recognized Boy Scout Troop #43 Leader Carey Baker, and three Scouts in the audience.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Tab 1. Pastor Michael 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 Grenier 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 Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. November 5, 2024, Election Proclamation

Mayor Grenier read the following Election Proclamation in its entirety:

***PROCLAMATION
BY ORDER OF THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF TAVARES***

NOTICE OF ELECTION

The 2024 City of Tavares Municipal Election will be held on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, at the Tavares Civic Center (Precinct 360), First United Methodist Church (Precinct 345), Lake County Agriculture Center (Precinct 365), Lake Frances Estates Clubhouse (Precinct 350), Imperial Terrace (Precinct 340), and Royal Harbor Social Hall (Precinct 370), for the purpose of electing three non-partisan Councilmembers to Seat 1, Seat 3, and Seat 5 to serve at large for the term 2024-2026.

Voters must be registered with the Lake County Supervisor of Elections on or prior to October 7, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Nominations to Seat 1, Seat 3, and Seat 5 shall be by petition, signed by at least twenty-five (25) qualified electors of the City of Tavares, and must name the individual and the specific Council seat

sought. A candidate may qualify for only one seat. The petition and all other required election documents must be filed with the City of Tavares City Clerk beginning August 1, 2024, at 12:00 noon and ending August 15, 2024, at 12:00 noon. If August 15th should fall on a weekend day or holiday, the deadline will be extended to the next business day at 12:00 noon. Election packets may be obtained from the City Clerk from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, Tavares City Hall, 201 E. Main Street, Tavares.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Election Proclamation, seconded by Lori Pfister.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted that precinct 345's name had changed. Ms. Novack said it was her understanding that the precinct had not notified the Lake County Supervisor of Elections of the name change.

The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 3. Lake Cares Food Pantry Presentation

Executive Director Kelsey Gonzales, Lake Cares Pantry, provided a brief overview of the services Lake Cares Pantry provides City of Tavares residents and their plans for the organization.

Council Member Singer thanked Ms. Gonzalez for making the presentation and commended the Lake Cares Food Pantry volunteers. He recommended that Ms. Gonzalez apply for a Tavares Community Grant during the next grant cycle, which would begin October 1.

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

Attorney Holt stated 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 Resolutions by title only:

RESOLUTION 2024-11

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, TO VACATE A PORTION OF A 50.00-FOOT WIDE RIGHT-OF-WAY (WOOD AVENUE) LOCATED AT 490 EAST CLIFFORD STREET TAVARES, FLORIDA 32778, LYING EAST OF LOTS 8 THROUGH 12, BLOCK B AND WEST OF LOTS 1 THROUGH 7 BLOCK C OF P.W. HARRINGTON'S ADDITION AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 1, PAGE 1, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SUBJECT TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

RESOLUTION 2024-12

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, TO VACATE A 16.00-FOOT WIDE ALLEY RIGHT-OF-WAY LOCATED AT 490 EAST CLIFFORD STREET TAVARES, FLORIDA 32778, LYING EAST OF LOTS 1 THROUGH 7, BLOCK C AND WEST OF LOTS 1 THROUGH 7 BLOCK D OF P.W. HARRINGTON'S ADDITION AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 1, PAGE 1, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SUBJECT TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

RESOLUTION 2024-13

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, DEDICATING CERTAIN CITY OWNED PROPERTY AS PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY KNOWN AS EAST CLIFFORD STREET, LOCATED ON THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF NORTH DISSTON AVENUE AND EAST CLIFFORD STREET; SUBJECT TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

RESOLUTION 2024-14

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, TO VACATE A PORTION OF AVALON PARK BOULEVARD RIGHT-OF-WAY LOCATED AT 2493 HUFFSTETLER DRIVE TAVARES, FL 32778, LYING WEST OF TRACT G AND NORTH OF TRACT F IN AVALON PARK TAVARES PHASE 1 SUBDIVISION AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 75, PAGES 48-53, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SUBJECT TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Grenier 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 Troy Singer.

Attorney Holt noted a correction to the minutes. She stated Amanda Boggus attended the meeting in her absence, and the minutes reflected Attorney Holt as present.

Troy Singer rescinded his second to the motion.

AMENDED MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 4. Approval of the June 5, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes] with Amanda Boggus identified as present in lieu of Lindsay Holt, seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously

Tab 4. Approval of the June 5, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda with correction.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 5. Resolution 2024-11 – Request to Vacate a Portion of the Unimproved Wood Avenue Right-of-Way Located at 490 East Clifford of the P.W. Harrington's Addition as Recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 1 of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida

Mr. Fabre made the following presentation:

This is a request to vacate a platted right-of-way easement located at 490 East Clifford of the P.W. Harrington's Addition as recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 1 of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida. This is a condition stipulated in the City's Fred Stover Sports Complex Purchase and Sale Agreement with the School Board of Lake County. The agreement stipulated that the City would make a good faith effort to vacate certain rights-of-way(s) and to dedicate certain right-of-way(s) in order to clear title on the subject property.

City staff reviewed the vacate request and determined no conflicts in the vacation regarding drainage, utilities, health, safety, or welfare of the Public. As a result, this official vacation will remove the city's public interest in this land.

On June 20, 2024, Planning & Zoning met and voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend approval of Resolution 2024-11 as presented.

Staff recommends that the City Council approves Option 1 and moves to approve

Resolution 2024-11 vacating a portion of the unimproved Wood Avenue Right-of-Way located at 490 East Clifford of the P.W. Harrington's Addition as recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 1 of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida.

Vice Mayor Gamble reminisced about the layout and size of the baseball field when it was initially built.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution 2024-11, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 6. Resolution 2024-12 – Request to Vacate an Unnamed Unimproved 16-foot-wide Alleyway Located at 490 East Clifford Street of the P.W. Harrington's Addition as Recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 1 of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida

Mr. Fabre made the following presentation:

This is a request to vacate a platted right-of-way easement located at 490 East Clifford of the P.W. Harrington's Addition as recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 1 of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida. This is a condition stipulated in the City's Fred Stover Sports Complex Purchase and Sale Agreement with the School Board of Lake County. The agreement stipulates that the City would make a good faith effort to vacate certain rights-of-way(s) and to dedicate certain right-of-way(s) in order to clear title on the property.

City staff reviewed the vacate request and determined no conflicts in the vacation regarding drainage, utilities, health, safety, or welfare of the Public. As a result, this official vacation will remove the city's public interest in this land.

On June 20, 2024, Planning & Zoning met and voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend approval of Resolution 2024-11 as presented.

Staff recommends that the City Council approves Option 1 and moves to approve Resolution 2024-12 in order to vacate an unnamed unimproved 16-foot-wide alleyway located at 490 East Clifford Street of the P.W. Harrington's Addition as recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 1 of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve Resolution 2024-12, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 7. Resolution 2024-13 – Dedication of Certain City Owned Property as Public Right-of-Way Known as East Clifford Street

Mr. Fabre made the following presentation:

This is to dedicate certain city-owned property as public Right-of-Way known as East Clifford Street, located on the southeast corner of North Disston Avenue and East Clifford Street. This is a condition stipulated in the City's Fred Stover Sports Complex Purchase and Sale Agreement with the School Board of Lake County. The agreement stipulates that the city would make a good faith effort to vacate certain rights-of-way(s) and to dedicate certain right-of-way(s) in order to clear title of the subject property.

City staff has determined that the city can maintain and regulate the proposed right-of-way. The proposed right-of-way will ensure the city's standard width of right-of-way is maintained. Moreover, the dedication of said property is consistent with the transportation and mobility goals, objectives, and policies of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

On June 20, 2024, Planning & Zoning met and voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend approval of Resolution 2024-11 as presented.

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Option 1 and moves to approve Resolution 2024-13 dedication of certain city-owned property as public Right-of-Way known as East Clifford Street.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution 2024-13, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 8. Resolution 2024-14 – Avalon Park Group, LLC, Request to Vacate Right-of-Way Located at the Northeasterly end of Avalon Park Boulevard of the Avalon Park Tavares Phase 1 Subdivision

Mr. Fabre made the following presentation:

This is a request to vacate a platted right-of-way easement approximately 1,234 square feet in size and located at the northeasterly end of Avalon Park Boulevard of the Avalon Park Tavares Phase 1 Subdivision, as recorded in Plat Book 75, Page 48-53, of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida. The Applicant is petitioning to vacate the subject right-of-way property since it was included in the design of Avalon Park Tavares Phase 2 townhomes. During the title and platting review process for Phase 2, a redesign of the r-o-w easement was incorporated, and the section petitioned for vacate is no longer needed as right-of-way.

City staff reviewed the vacate request and determined no conflicts in the vacation regarding drainage, utilities, health, safety, or welfare of the Public. As a result, this vacation will remove the city's public interest in this land.

On June 20, 2024, Planning & Zoning met and voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend approval of Resolution 2024-11 as presented.

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Option 1 and moves to approve Resolution 2024-14 vacation of a right-of-way located at the end of the northeasterly end of Avalon Park Boulevard of the Avalon Park Tavares Phase 1 Subdivision, as recorded in Plat Book 75, Page 48-53, of the Public Records of Lake County, Florida.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve Resolution 2024-14, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 9. Tavares Public Library Patron Guidelines and Standards of Conduct

Mr. Aldrich made the following presentation:

In order to ensure the rights and safety of both the library patrons and staff, specific conduct guidelines and standards are needed to govern the behavior within the Tavares Public Library. These guidelines and standards of conduct will provide specific procedures for staff and serve to maintain an atmosphere conducive to library objectives.

Upon City Council direction, staff will post these adopted guidelines and standards of conduct in the library and on the City's website for the public's view.

Staff recommended the Council approve Option 1: Approve the Patron Guidelines and Standards of Conduct governing the use of the City of Tavares Public Library and authorize staff to update as needed.

Mayor Grenier noted his support and discussed the importance of having guidelines and standards in place for the safety of the library staff and patrons.

Council Member Pfister noted her support and commended Mr. Aldrich for a well-done job.

MOTION

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

Tab 10. Tavares Recreation Department Facilities and Sports Parks Visitor Guidelines and Standards of Conduct

Mr. Aldrich made the following presentation:

In order to ensure the rights and safety of both visitors and staff, specific conduct guidelines and standards are needed to govern the behavior at the recreation facilities and sports parks. These guidelines and standards of conduct will provide specific procedures for staff and serve to maintain an atmosphere conducive to the Recreation Department's objectives.

Upon City Council direction, staff will post these adopted guidelines and standards of conduct at the facilities and on the City's website for the public's view.

Staff recommended the Council approve Option 1: Approve the Visitor Guidelines and Standards of Conduct governing the use of the City of Tavares Recreation Facilities and Sports Parks, and authorize staff to update as needed.

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

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve Option 1, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 11. Award Invitation to Bid Number 2024-0003 for Lake Hermosa Booster Pump Project to the Lowest Responsive Bidder

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

On February 4, 2024, the City of Tavares advertised an Invitation to Bid for the Lake Hermosa Booster Pump – Invitation to Bid (ITB) No. 2024-0003. Four (4) companies responded with L7 Construction of Longwood, Florida being the lowest bidder at \$10,357,000.00. The City's engineering firm for the project, Arcadis US, Inc., has reviewed the lowest bidder's proposal and has recommended approval. A recommendation letter from Arcadis US, Inc. is

attached.

On October 4, 2023, the City Council authorized State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) Loan 350981 in the amount of \$ \$7,235,190 to fund the project (\$5,788,151 designated for loan repayment, and \$1,447,038 designated for loan principal forgiveness).

As this project is funded through FDEP State Revolving Loan Funds, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) approval of the recommended bid from the lowest responsive bidder was required. The Utility Director received award approval from FDEP on June 18, 2024 (attached) to award the bid to L7 Construction.

A Loan increase from FDEP State Revolving Loan Funds to cover the additional costs will go before the August SRF Meeting in Tallahassee. A loan amendment will be provided to the City after the August SRF Meeting.

Final submission of the scope of service by this company has been reviewed by staff and by the engineer and has met compliance in all areas.

Staff recommends Option 1, the award of Invitation to Bid (ITB) 2024-0003 to L7 Construction in the amount of \$10,357,000 contingent on receiving additional SRF financing for the project (loan funding amendment), and authorize staff to negotiate and execute a contract.

Mayor Grenier asked the Council for comments.

Council Member Pfister asked if the City was required to accept the lowest bidder. Ms. Houghton said the city engineer reviewed the bids and found the lowest bidder to be compliant with bid specifications and FDEP. Mr. Drury said the City recommended taking the lowest qualified bidder.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve, seconded by Troy Singer.

Vice Mayor Gamble asked if the City would lose SRF funding if a company other than the lowest qualified bidder was selected. Mr. Drury said the City would forward information on identified issues with the lowest qualified bidder to the State. The State would then return with comments for or against any changes for the Council to consider.

Council Member Singer asked when the City would be provided information on the loan amount. Ms. Houghton said the State representative in Tallahassee did not give an exact date and indicated the third week of August 2024. Council Member Singer asked if the loan would be at a 1.1% interest rate. Ms. Houghton said she could not guarantee the interest rate, which could be higher given the current economic environment. Council Member Singer asked if the contractor would hold the bid until the loan was

finalized. Ms. Houghton said the City asked the contractor for written confirmation the contractor could wait.

The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Vice Mayor Gamble suggested moving the Audience to be Heard section up on the agenda so those in the audience who did not wish to remain for the Budget Hearing could leave.

Mayor Grenier moved the Audience to be Heard section to be heard next on the agenda.

XIV. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Michael Watkins, 805 Summerall Avenue, Tavares, thanked the Fire Department, City Administrator, Police Chief and Officers, and Council Member Gamble for attending a recent Juneteenth celebration.

Carey Baker, Boy Scout Troop Leader #43 and Lake County Property Appraiser, thanked the Council for allowing the Scouts to attend the meeting. He said the three Scouts attended Tavares High School and noted they were working on their Citizenship and Community Merit Badges, which are required to be an Eagle Scout.

Emad Shahid, 107 E. Ruby Street, Tavares, said the Council recently had a Code Enforcement Fine Reduction Request to come before them for consideration. He said he owns a home on Ruby Street with liens and code enforcement fines from a previous owner. At a recent hearing, he received reduced fines from the Code Enforcement Special Magistrate. Mr. Shahid said he thought the Code Enforcement hearing concluded his case and recently discovered a second hearing before the City Council that he missed. He asked the Council if they would place another discussion for a reduction in fines on the next month's agenda.

Mayor Grenier asked for comments from the Council.

There was a consensus from the Council to bring the 107 Ruby Street Code Enforcement fine and lien forgiveness request back for discussion.

Mr. Drury said he would place the discussion on the next agenda.

XI. BUDGET WORKSHOP AND SETTING OF MAXIMUM MILLAGE RATE

Tab 12. Budget Workshop – General Fund Presentation

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The City of Tavares operates and oversees several enterprises including:

1. **General Government:** Police, Fire, Emergency Management, Recreational Parks, Multiple Nature Parks, A County Regional Park Complex located off Woodlea Road (West Campus) and off David Walker Road (East Campus), City-Wide Beautification America-In-Bloom Program, Public Library, Street Paving & Sidewalk Program, Street Lighting, Traffic Intersection Signalizations, Golf Cart street friendly Program, Street Addressing and City Gateway & Directional Signage Program, Street Corridor Landscaping Program, City Vehicle Fleet Maintenance Program, Public Works, City Administration, City Finance, City Budgeting Department, Procurement Department, Information Technology Department, Building Permitting, Building Inspections, Code Enforcement, City Planning Services, Public Records Retention, Public Meeting Minutes Notation and Recording, Human Resources Department, Employee benefits and Recruitment Program, Public Communications, City Council Meetings, City Meeting Live Streaming Productions, Website and Social Media Program, Historical Museum, Economic Development, City Marina, Seaplane Base, Grant Programs, Public Infrastructure Insurance and Risk Management, Workers Compensation, Auto and General Property Liability Program, Pavilion on The Lake Special Events and Wedding Facility, Two Community Civic Centers, Senior Service Programming, adult and Youth Recreation Programs, Splash Park, Play Grounds and exercise stations, Volleyball courts, boat ramps, Community Parades, Fireworks and Special Events, Planning and Zoning and Wooton Wonderland.
2. **Utilities:** Sewer Plant, Water Plant, Reclaimed Water Plant, water distribution system, sewer collection system, a reclaimed water distribution system and a utility bill collections department, and a fully certified wastewater, water and public health Laboratory.
3. **Stormwater:** A stormwater retention, detention, collection, maintenance system, right of way mowing and tree trimming maintenance department. Street Sweeping program.
4. **Garbage & Recycling collection system:** A residential garbage collection program, recycling program, and commercial garbage collection program.
5. **Capital Program:** A five (5) year capital program utilizing grants and other sources of funds to replace and build public infrastructure.

At this first budget workshop, the Finance Department will present the General Fund Proposed Budget (#1 above), and at the following budget workshops, the remaining enterprises #2-#5 will be presented.

The City Council previously developed broad budget priorities for the City Administrator to use as guiding principles in developing next year's FY 25 proposed budget (see attached).

The City Administrator, Finance Director and Budget Department have worked

with each Department Director to develop departmental budgets which have been incorporated into this General Fund budget. To achieve a balanced budget, some proposed items were cut and are reflected in the attached comprehensive “FY 2025 Cut List” and where many of the Council’s goals have been met, not all of them have been met.

As in previous years, the cut list is organized into several categories:

1. **“Reduction”** means the item is still in the proposed FY 25 budget and the City Administrator has reduced the amount that was requested by the Department Director.
2. **“Cut”** means the City Administrator has removed the entire item from the budget.
3. **“Similar”** means the item was provided for in the prior year.
4. **“Enhanced”** means the item is a higher level of service than provided for in the prior year.
5. **“Personal Services”** means a new position
6. **“Operating Expenses”** means general operating and maintenance expenses
7. **“Capital Equipment”** means operating and maintenance equipment over \$5,000 in value and more than a three-year lifespan.
8. **“Capital Projects”**: Over \$5,000 in value and generally requires designing, engineering, bidding, construction or fabrication and project oversight during the procurement, construction and installation process.
9. **“Debt Service”** The annual cost of the repayment toward a loan for a capital item.

It is recommended that the City Council review the Cut List closely. While the items on the cut list were initially identified by the City’s professional Department Directors as necessary for efficiency and productivity, they were ultimately removed by the City Administrator to maintain a balanced budget and align with the Council’s goals. The cut list includes some items that were reflected in the City Council’s goals that were cut to maintain a balanced budget.

Proposed Budget Highlights:

1. A Similar Level of Service is achieved and presented as directed by Council. (Note: New and enhanced levels of service were not included – See Exhibit B cut “Enhanced” items)
2. The FY 25 budget is increased by 6.92% over the current year’s FY 24 Adopted Budget to maintain a similar level of service while keeping up with increases in cost, including health insurance (estimated at 4% increase), property insurance (estimated at 25% increase), and workers’ compensation (estimated at 10% increase) and inflation.
3. The Debt Service millage property tax rate is decreased from .1817 down to .1601.

4. *The General Fund millage property tax rate is increased from 6.5950 to 6.9500 mills. This equates to an increase of \$50 per year or \$4.17 per month on a homesteaded house valued at \$200,000 next year over this year for this proposed budget (Debt Service rate reduction included). The increase equals \$582,927 for the General fund, which is approximately the amount needed to cover the six (6) proposed new additional Police and Fire Department positions.*
5. *The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommendation of two (2) months General Fund reserves is exceeded by 1.38 months to 3.38 months, totaling \$7,765,913 in General Fund Reserves. The additional 1.38 months equates to \$3,173,251 and has been recommended and put in place to cover higher than normal fluctuating inflation rates and higher than normal predicted storm events.*
6. *The Fire Assessment is level funded (no rate increase).*
7. *Employee raises are established at 8.0%.*
8. *The increased healthcare costs are shared by employees and employer.*
9. *Six new Public Safety positions are proposed for Police (2) and Fire (4).*
10. *Six new General Funded positions are proposed as follows: 2 for Public Works, 1 for Parks, 1 for Recreation, 1 for Library and 1 for Special Events.*
11. *Citywide Street paving is proposed at \$400,000.*

Proposed Property Tax Millage Rate with a Balanced Budget:

This proposed budget is balanced and reflects a slight property tax millage rate increase of 5.5% from 6.5950 to 6.9500.

This was necessary to fund the six (6) new Police and Fire Department positions along with others. It should be noted that the Council has lowered the tax rate consistently for the past five (5) straight years in a row and this short-term one time 5.38% bump-up was necessary to keep pace with Public Safety staffing needs, inflation as well as much needed and put-off positions in Public Works, Parks, Recreation, Library and Special Events departments. The city has grown from 10,000 people to over 21,000 people over the past decade and a half, adding a hospital and many new businesses. The County's Governmental Campus uses many City Services but pays no taxes for those City Services. The time has come to staff up slightly to service the residents, business community, and County Governmental campus with proper policing and firefighting protection. It is hopeful that in the ensuing years the city will be in a position to resume lowering the rate again as it has done so for the past five (5) years. It should also be noted that the Fire Chief continues to apply for Firefighter grants which, if awarded, will lower the amount of dollars needed from the General Fund to cover the proposed firefighter positions.

The debt service tax rate decreased again for the 7th year in a row from .1817 mills down to .1601 mills (a 12% decrease). At the proposed property tax rate, homeowners with a house valued at \$150,000 and standard homestead exemption would pay \$711 per year or \$59 per month in City Ad Valorem Property Taxes for the budget that is before Council for FY 2025.

This first budget workshop on July 17, 2024, is to deliver, present and discuss the General Fund budget. The second budget workshop on August 7th, 2024, is to deliver, present, and discuss the enterprise funds (Water, Wastewater, Reclamation, Stormwater, Solid Waste, Seaplane Base/Marina, Pavilion on the Lake) and discuss this General Fund Budget. A high-level overview of Special Revenue Fund budgets will also be presented.

The maximum tentative millage rate will be set at the first budget workshop on July 17, 2024, after the budget presentation is delivered. A third Council budget workshop is scheduled for August 21, 2024, to discuss all budgets and the Five (5) Year Capital Improvement Plan, followed by two Public Hearings on the budget on September 4, 2024, and September 18, 2024.

Current estimates are expected to change over the next couple of weeks for State Shared revenues, general liability insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and firefighter grants. As new estimates become available and grants are awarded, staff will update the budget, and provide a listing of updated estimates and the effect on the proposed budget to the City Council.

It is recommended the Finance Director present details of the General Fund budget to the Council, department by department.

Ms. Houghton provided a PowerPoint presentation of the General Fund Budget.

Vice Mayor Gamble inquired about the Fire Department Safer Grant. Ms. Houghton said the grant would fund 75% of the cost, and 25% was a match and included in the budget. She noted three public safety positions were included in the General Fund, and three firefighter positions were included in the Safer Grant funds. Mr. Drury said Chief Keith applied for the grant for three firefighters, which, if awarded, would reduce costs by 75%. He said the costs would be provided at the following meeting.

Mr. Drury commended and thanked Ms. Bublitz for her work negotiating a health wellness program for the employees, which reduced the increases from double-digit to single-digit.

Mr. Drury said the budget began when the Council set and voted on priorities in February 2024. The priorities were provided to each Department Director, who worked for three months to create budgets that honored the Council's priorities and needs of the department and employees. He said some requested items could not be attained and were cut for a balanced budget. Mr. Drury asked the Council to review the cut list and said there may be an item or two the Council deems important and may wish to fund.

Mr. Drury said the budget presented to the Council was one of the best the Council had received for the City. He said Tavares was lean, and the employees worked hard to produce much for its citizens. Mr. Drury said staff would update the budget throughout the budget process and provide additional information to the Council.

Mayor Grenier asked for comments from the Council.

Mayor Grenier asked for additional comments from the Council. There were none.

Tab 13. Budget Workshop – Setting of Maximum Tentative Millage Rate

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The General Fund budget was presented earlier at this City Council meeting. The maximum tentative millage rate will be set at this meeting. The Utility and Special Revenue Fund budgets will be presented at the next City Council meeting on August 7, 2024. The Five-Year Capital Plan will be delivered, presented and discussed at the August 21, 2024, budget workshop.

Two Public Hearings on the budget are scheduled for September 4, 2024, and September 18, 2024.

Once the City Council sets the Maximum Tentative Millage Rate, it may be decreased as the budget process continues; however, it may not be increased.

- The proposed General Fund millage rate of 6.9500 mills represents an increase from the prior year of 0.355 mills (6.9500 - 6.5950), a 5.38% increase over the prior year, and 15.52% above the estimated rollback rate of 6.0162 mills.*
- The proposed Voted Debt Service millage rate of .1601 mills represents a decrease from the prior year of .0216 mills (.1817 - .1601), a 11.89% decrease over the prior year.*
- The total increase is .3334 mills which is a 4.92% total increase over the prior year adopted millage rates.*
- This increase equates to an increase of \$50 per year or \$4.17 per month on a homesteaded house valued at \$200,000 next year over this year. The increase generates \$582,927 which is approximately the amount needed to cover the six (6) proposed new additional Police and Fire Department positions.*

Staff recommended Option 1: Move to set the Maximum Tentative Millage Rate at 6.9500 mills, and the Maximum Tentative Voted Debt Millage Rate at 0.1601 mills.

Mayor Grenier asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Pfister said she preferred to set the maximum tentative millage rate higher as items on the cut list needed further discussion and possibly put back into the budget.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he saw items on the cut list that needed further discussion. He noted that tax funding may be reduced due to the November ballot regarding homestead exemptions.

A discussion was held on an increased tentative maximum millage rate.

Council Member Singer was impressed that the addition of public safety personnel and increased inflation costs resulted in only a 5.5% increase. He concurred with Council Member Pfister and said many items on the cut list needed further discussion. He was confident that a set maximum tentative millage rate, as discussed, could be reduced.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to set the Maximum Tentative Millage Rate at 7.25 mills, and the Maximum Tentative Voted Debt Millage Rate at 0.1601 mills, seconded by Sandy Gamble.

Council Member Singer asked for the percentage increase from last year's millage rate without debt. Mr. Drury said 10%. Ms. Houghton said the preliminary maximum rate was well within the limit for requiring a majority vote of the governing body.

The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

Council Member Pfister inquired about the study on residential impact fees. Mr. Drury said staff would return to the Council on residential impact fees and Land Development Regulations for lot sizes.

Mayor Grenier inquired about electronic game rooms. Mr. Drury said staff would bring forward an ordinance to eliminate them.

XV. REPORTS

Tab 14. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury said the Council's agenda packets included a list of upcoming meetings and events. He and Vice Mayor Gamble attended a Florida League of Cities meeting in Mount Dora that highlighted Police Dogs.

Ms. Novack stated that candidate election packets would be available in the City Clerk's office between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and on the City website.

Scott Aldrich thanked Mayor Grenier for attending the summer reading program ceremonies closing at the library on August 15, 2024.

Ms. Houghton thanked the Council and stated how much she enjoys presenting the annual budget to the Council. Mayor Grenier commended Ms. Houghton on her efforts.

Tab 15. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Pfister commended Mr. Drury and the Department Directors for their work on the annual budget. She said all their hard work did not go unnoticed.

Council Member Singer noted he attended the 4th of July celebrations and said the event was wonderful. He commended the departments that assisted in putting on the event, including the Police, Fire, Utility, and Right-of-Way departments.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted he attended the 4th of July celebrations and said the fireworks were great. He asked for an update on the Splash Park. Mr. Clark said the Splash Park was open and staff would bring an upgrade plan in the future.

Vice Mayor Gamble discussed the presentation he attended on Police K9 dogs and said they enhanced situations where mental health and post-traumatic stress syndrome were involved. He said many dogs were civilian dogs. Chief Coursey noted that Lieutenant Schmidbauer's personal dog was recently law enforcement certified. She said the dog could help calm people in stressful situations.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted he completed his annual ethics training.

Vice Mayor Gamble commended Mr. Drury, Ms. Houghton, and Mr. Jones for presenting a well-balanced budget, which was appreciated. He inquired about the amount .38 of the three-month reserves would equate. He noted his support for maintaining a three-month reserve and said hurricane season was pending.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk