



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 21, 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
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.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Tab 1. Deacon Paul Guacher, St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic Church

Deacon Paul Guacher, St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic 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

Walter Price moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

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 Resolution by title only:

RESOLUTION 2024-17

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE 2024 FISCAL YEAR ADOPTED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF TAVARES, REPRESENTING THE SECOND AMENDMENT TO THE ADOPTED BUDGET, AND PROVIDING FOR A REPEALER, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Approval of the August 7, 2021, City Council Meeting Minutes, Tab 3. Seaport Village Phase 1 – Final Plat, and Tab 4. Avalon Park Phase 2 – Final Plat], seconded by Walter Price. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 2. Approval of the August 7, 2021, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

Tab 3. Seaport Village Phase 1 – Final Plat

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

Tab 4. Avalon Park Phase 2 – Final Plat

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 5. Resolution 2024-17 – Second Budget Amendment for FY 2024

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

The attached resolution represents increases and/or decreases to the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2024. Appropriation increases represent capital projects, ARPA expenditures, and prior year/project encumbrance rollovers. In addition, the Resolution also reflects transfers between individual accounts within adopted budgets for all departments.

This resolution represents the SECOND AMENDMENT to the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

Staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve Resolution 2024-17 amending the FY 2023-2024 City of Tavares Annual Operating Budget.

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

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution 2024-17, seconded by Walter Price. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 6. Recreation and Library Services Summer Programs Update

Attorney Holt entered the meeting at 4:14 p.m.

Rebecca Campbell, Library Director, made the following presentation and provided a brief video of the Summer Concert Series to those in the audience:

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

- *Summer Reading Olympics: Read for the Gold!*
- *Big Shows*
- *Intimate Learning Experiences*
- *Summer Concert Series*

Pete Sherrard, Recreation Manager, provided a PowerPoint presentation made the following presentation:

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

- *Tavares Youth Soccer*
- *Tavares Youth Basketball Camp*
- *Tavares Babe Ruth All-Stars*
- *Tavares Youth Flag Football*
- *Senior Programs*
- *Partnership Programs with the YMCA*

Mayor Grenier commended the Library and Recreation department teams and service to the citizens.

Council Member Pfister said her grandchildren attended the Tavares Youth Basketball Camp and enjoyed the program. She said she was pleased with the growth of the recreation program and thanked Mr. Aldrich and Mr. Sherrard.

Vice Mayor Gamble thanked and commended Ms. Campbell and Mr. Sherrard for thinking outside the box.

Mr. Drury said the programs with the YMCA could only have been accomplished with the assistance and partnership between the YMCA, Lake County, and the City of Tavares. He recognized YMCA Director Andy Weighill in the audience and thanked him for attending the meeting.

Mr. Aldrich commended Ms. Campbell and Mr. Sherrard for their efforts.

Tab 7. Accept and Award Recommended Architect Firm for the Golden Triangle Regional Park Design

Mr. Aldrich made the following presentation:

On April 16, 2024, the City of Tavares advertised a Request For Qualifications (RFQ 2024-0006) for an architect firm to complete a build-out of the City's Golden Triangle Regional Park with a phased project. Nine firms responded with statements of qualifications on May 23, 2024. A selection committee made up of the following evaluated the nine proposals at a committee meeting on June 11, 2024:

- *John Drury, City of Tavares*
- *Scott Aldrich, City of Tavares*
- *Bobby Bonilla, Lake County, Florida*
- *Lindsaia Johansmeyer, Lake County, Florida*
- *Andy Weighill, YMCA of Central Florida*

The committee identified the top five firms based on rankings and invited them to do a presentation and interview process for further evaluation. The following firms made presentations to the selection committee on July 10, 2024:

*Borelli + Partners, Inc
720 Vassar St
Orlando, FL 32804*

*Lose Design
3237 Satellite Blvd, Suite 450
Duluth, GA 30096*

*OLC (Ohlson Lavoie Corporation)
2295 S Hiawassee Rd, Suite 310
Orlando, FL 32835*

*Powell Studio Architecture
713 W Montrose St
Clermont, FL 34711*

*Spiezle Architectural Group, Inc.
1101 N Lake Destiny Rd, Suite 365
Maitland, FL 32751*

All firms interviewed were qualified and capable of the job, and it was a difficult decision to select the top firm. Ultimately, the selection committee unanimously ranked the firms as follows:

1. *Powell Studio Architecture*
2. *Borelli + Partners*
3. *Spiezle Architectural Group*
4. *OLC*

5. Lose Design

Attached are both the RFQ response from the number one selected firm, Powell Studio Architecture, and the recorded minutes from the selection committee's shortlisted interviews and presentations. The other RFQ responses are available upon request.

Staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve the recommended architect firm and authorize staff to negotiate a contract.

Mayor Grenier asked for comments from the Council.

Vice Mayor Pfister said she was excited to see the presentation.

Mr. Drury said a vision without implementation was a hallucination, and the award began the implementation process. Once awarded, the City would move forward with design, engineering, and open facilities to the public.

Council Member Singer said the presentation provided to the Council in the agenda packet was wonderful, and he looked forward to the project moving forward.

Council Member Price asked Mr. Weighill if he agreed with the selection. Mr. Weighill confirmed.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted his support in moving forward with the project.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve [Option 1], seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted Lake County was funding the project, including the design by the architectural firm.

Tab 8. Request for Reduction in Code Enforcement Liens at 4521 Marsh Harbor Drive

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

Chapter 2, Article 3, Section 2 of the City sets forth the Enforcement of Municipal Codes.

Ordinance 2011-12 established the provision for the creation, establishment and levy of a lien against properties which have unpaid utility charges by the owner.

Currently, there is one outstanding, unresolved, Code Enforcement Case with

finer assessed on the property located at 4521 Marsh Harbor Dr., identified by the Lake County Property Appraiser records as Alt Key No. 3836093.

Case CET1506-0022 listed above went before the City of Tavares Code Enforcement Special Magistrate on September 22, 2015.

The Special Magistrate found the property owner guilty and issued a corrective action deadline of October 2, 2015. A lien was recorded on April 13, 2017; the fines continued to accrue until May 21, 2023.

A Code Enforcement Lien was recorded on April 13, 2017, in the amount of \$26,475.96 with fines accruing at \$50 per day until May 21, 2023. Outstanding fines remain unpaid.

Staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to hear Renata G. Carriero, current property owner of 4521 Marsh Harbo Drive, and Council hold a discussion for reduction of Code Enforcement Lien for Case CET1506-0022

Ms. Houghton said the total accrued fines to date were \$139,475.96, and the amount the Council may consider for reduction was \$139,275.00. She said a \$75.96 administrative fee and a fine of \$125.00 were not forgivable.

Mayor Grenier welcomed Keenan and Renata Carriero to the podium.

Keenan Carriero, the homeowner, thanked the Council for considering their request for a reduction in fines and liens. He said their past property manager contacted them approximately ten years prior, asking if the home's renters could install a fence. Mr. Carriero said they received a blank City of Eustis permit application and advised the property manager that a correct and completed permit application would be needed to move forward with a fence. He said they never heard back from the property manager, who had since passed away and believed a fence had not been installed. He said they discovered the fence two months prior while researching the property and have since taken it down. Mr. Carriero said they never received violation notices from the City.

Mayor Grenier asked Mr. and Mrs. Carriero if they visited Tavares to check on the house.

Ms. Carriero said she resides out of state and owned the property since construction. She had someone local to manage the property. When they found out about the fine and violation, she contacted Mr. Drury. Since then, they have taken action to correct the violation. Mr. Carriero said they would have no way to know if a building permit was not submitted and that a small fence in the back of the property caused the violation.

Mayor Grenier asked the Carriero's if they ever lived in the home and how they came to own the property. Ms. Carriero said that when the Groves at Baytree community was

being built, a friend was investing in the neighborhood and told them how great the City of Tavares was. She said they were looking for an investment for their future.

Council Member Singer asked if the violation was due to a fence built without a permit and rectified by taking the fence down. Ms. Carriero confirmed. Council Member Singer asked if the City followed all protocols and proper notice. Mr. McCormick confirmed and said the property owner listed their address with the Lake County Property Appraiser, Lake County Tax Assessor, and on the deed as 4521 Marsh Harbor Drive, the violation address, rather than their home address out of town. Notices were mailed to the address on record. The property was posted per Florida Statutes Chapter 162 requirements when the certified mailing was not claimed or received. The violation was not corrected within the corrective action deadline, and the Special Magistrate then heard the case. The Special Magistrate provided additional time to cure the violation, which did not happen, and fines continued.

Council Member Singer asked what the City could do to ensure this type of situation did not happen in the future. Mr. McCormick said the property owners are responsible for providing the property appraiser and tax assessor with the correct address. He said some people purchase properties where they live for a brief period and do not have the address changed when they move somewhere else, and then they maintain the home as a rental property. He said it would be impossible to track down people as mortgage companies do not provide contact information, which is why the Florida statutes require cities to obtain information from Property Appraisers and Tax Assessors for addresses.

Mr. Carriero said the tenant had contact information for the property manager and him and did not provide the mail to either. He said it would have been an easy task to remedy the violation. Council Member Singer asked if the Carriero's had the tenant's contact information. Mr. Carriero confirmed. He said the tenant would not have the funds to cover the cost of the fines or liens and confirmed that their contact information had been updated with the property appraiser and tax collector. Council Member Singer noted a concern about setting a precedent for future fine reduction requests.

A discussion was held regarding a violation with the Homeowners Association, which cost the Carrieros \$5,000 for a \$200.00 pressure washing job. He said an attorney contacted them regarding that issue and noted he was frustrated with the tenants who have since moved. He confirmed the renter had their contact information.

Council Member Pfister asked the Carriero's how they received their property tax trim notices. Ms. Carriero said the property taxes were taken care of through the mortgage company.

Ms. Carriero said it was unfortunate they went so long without knowing about the violation and incurring fines. After completing a public records search, he said they discovered the violation and fines. Once they found out, they addressed the situation.

Mayor Grenier questioned why the Carriero's had not seen their investment. Mr. Carriero said they trusted the property management company. Ms. Carriero said when the violations occurred, she had a newborn and a two-year-old. A trip to Florida was impossible; she trusted the people supervising the property.

Mr. Drury noted the property owners would receive their tax bills from the Lake County Property Appraiser in the future now that they have updated their contact information, even though the mortgage company takes care of payment. He said they would provide an opportunity to be aware of the cost of their property taxes.

Council Member Price asked how often notices were sent out. Mr. McCormick said notices would stop when a property came into compliance, and an Order of Compliance was issued and sent by certified mail after the Code Enforcement Special Magistrate Hearing. He said Florida statutes do not require notification then, and there is no way to know where the people live. He stated a lien would be placed on the property after one year. Once a lien was in place, the fines would have to go before the Council for forgiveness.

Mr. Carriero said the fence was nice and had been removed.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to reduce the fine by 60%.

Council Member Singer asked for the dollar amount of the adjusted fine as so moved. Mr. Drury said the new fine amount would be \$55,710.

The motion was seconded by Troy Singer.

Council Member Singer said this was a difficult situation for the Council. He noted extenuating circumstances and said the City did everything it was supposed to do. He supported reducing the fine and did not feel the City was in a position to wipe the fine out.

Mayor Grenier said he suggested the Carriero's come to Tavares and visit their property. Ms. Carriero said she appreciated coming to Tavares and seeing the beauty and amenities the City offers.

Council Member Pfister said it was an unfortunate mistake. She said the penalty should be 10% of the fines plus City costs.

Mr. Drury said the cost at 10% of the fines would be \$13,927 plus City costs of \$75.96 and \$125.00. Council Member Pfister said there was no intention to do anything wrong by the Carriero's

Sandy Gamble rescinded the motion, and Troy Singer rescinded his second to the motion.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to adjust the amount to 10% of fines plus cost, seconded by Walter Price.

Council Member Singer asked if the motion was correctly withdrawn. Attorney Holt confirmed.

Mr. Drury said, for the record, the dollar figure is \$14,128.46, which is the 10% plus \$75.96 and \$125.00 administrative costs.

Council Member Price said that was reasonable considering all the extenuating circumstances.

Council Member Singer commended the Carriero's for contacting the City Administrator. He asked them to come and visit Tavares.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Mayor Grenier closed the meeting for a five-minute recess at 5:05 p.m.

Mayor Grenier reconvened the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

XI. BUDGET WORKSHOP

Tab 9. Budget Workshop – Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The General Fund budget was presented to Council at the July 17th budget workshop. The Enterprise and Special Revenue Fund budgets were presented to Council at the August 7th budget workshop. The City Council set the maximum tentative millage rate of 7.2500 mills, and the maximum tentative voted debt millage rate of 0.1601 mills at the July 17th 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 2025 Proposed Budget.

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

Mr. Drury said staff was available for questions on capital items.

Tab 10. Budget Workshop – Continued Deliberations and Updates to FY 2025 Proposed Budget

Mr. Drury made the following Presentation:

The current proposed draft budget is fully balanced, increases reserves, increases staffing for public safety, provides a similar level of service and takes care of employees. At the previous Budget Workshop, the Council continued budget deliberations. Attached is a summary of items discussed at the last budget workshop.

An opportunity is provided for the Council to again continue budget deliberations and then finalize a draft budget for the September 4th, 2024, first Public Hearing and September 18th, 2024, second and final Public Hearing.

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.

Council Member Pfister said she initially supported rebuilding the Tavares Nature Park pier/docks and then realized the wetland nature of the park would create an ongoing struggle to maintain. She discussed the beauty of the docks from a water view while recently boating and said the park was one of the few places reminiscent of old Florida. She said she would like to leave the park in its current and natural condition and habitat and remove the \$75,000 for boat dock removal from the budget.

Vice Mayor Gamble noted a concern regarding liability in leaving the boat docks.

Mr. Drury said staff could accommodate the request and remove the dilapidated raised boardwalk. He said he did not believe there would be an issue removing the pier/dock in the next year or two.

Council Member Singer asked for clarification on what would be closed. Mr. Drury said the fishing pier/dock had been closed to the public for the past seven years. The raised boardwalk to the fishing pier would be closed within the week. The park would remain open, path maintenance would continue, and visitors could enjoy the park during the dry periods. He said the park was an ecosystem that supported the area's flora and fauna. Mr. Drury noted Tavares had four large wetland areas, including Squibb Park. Council Member Pfister said Squibb Park had more parking area than Tavares Nature Park. She said if there were more funds in the budget, she would want to do more. Mayor Grenier asked how the fishing pier would be closed. Mr. Dillon said boards would be placed to block access with aluminum signs stating the fishing pier/dock was closed.

Council Member Singer asked if the land lease would accommodate Council Member Pfister's request. Mr. Dillon confirmed.

Council Member Price inquired about the \$75,000 in funds. Council Member Pfister said the Council was not done working on the budget, and the \$75,000 would not be earmarked for the dock demolition.

Vice Mayor Gamble said it was his understanding the Police Department had a vehicle for a new Police Officer to utilize. Chief Coursey said four Police vehicles were included in the budget. Chief Coursey noted the Police Department would be good with the four Police vehicles and two positions as proposed in the budget. Ms. Houghton said Police Impact Fees would fund one vehicle.

Council Member Singer said he was glad to see the picnic tables at Aesop's park added to the budget. He said he would like to include cemetery benches added from the cut list for \$8,700.00. He said the cemetery receives a lot of visitors.

Mayor Grenier concurred with Council Member Singer.

Council Member Pfister asked if pavement or pavers would be installed in the parking lot by the seaplane base and marina. Mr. Drury said parking had been designed, engineered, and permitted, and the project was ready. Mr. Tweedie said the project was designed with paved parking in some areas.

A discussion was held on the parking areas to be paved, and Mr. Drury said traffic flow at Joanna would improve in addition to the parking spaces. Council Member Pfister asked if pavers could be used. Mr. Tweedie said the design and concept combined a paved lane with pavers on the parking spots. He said staff could include only pavers as a bid alternate and see what the pricing comes back, and if it was within budget or close, it would be brought back to the Council for consideration. He confirmed the Council would be able to see a rendering.

Council Member Price asked if a study had been conducted to confirm parking was needed. Mr. Drury said a study had not been completed for downtown parking and the master plan included adding parking garages and parking. He discussed the ongoing need to keep up with parking in cities, as it takes years to create parking areas. Council Member Price asked if anything else could be placed in the space. Mr. Drury said the land was narrow. Mr. Tweedie stated most of the land was owned by the City, and the hotel owned a portion. The City had already negotiated an easement with the hotel property owner.

Mayor Grenier said it was an eyesore and would be a benefit to complete that portion downtown.

Council Member Price asked what the millage rate would be if the extra projects requested by the Council were included. Ms. Houghton and Mr. Drury said 7.05 mills.

Council Member Price asked how many dollars it would take to get back to the previous year's millage rate. Ms. Houghton said that, based on the original budget, the Council would have to cut \$401,000 and would not include the items on the Council's list. Mr.

Drury said that number must be double-checked and returned to the Council at the next meeting.

Council Member Price said he wants to see if there is any possible scenario to get back to the previous year's millage rate and still incorporate the additional items the Council requested. Mr. Drury said it would be put together and reflect where it falls short of the request. Council Member Price said he understood the rollback rate could not be achieved and would like to see some scenario to return to the previous year's rate.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he wanted to ensure the Council did not touch the 8% increase for the employees. Mr. Drury said that would not be done.

Mayor Grenier asked for comments from the audience.

Vance Jochim, 12619 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake County, thanked Council Member Pfister for saving \$75,000. He provided a list of proposals to the Council for added funding for the Tavares Library and Nature Park. Mr. Jochim provided his collection recommendations for the Tavares Library. He provided a list of issues for the Tavares Nature Park, including the fishing pier, boardwalk, and park map.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

Council Member Price asked for an update on highway Civic organization signs. A discussion was held on road ownership, eligibility, participating organizations, and existing signage. Mr. Drury said staff would conduct research and bring back a cost estimate and recommended locations to the Council. Mr. Drury said a sign location on US441 would be challenging as it was a state road.

XIV. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

XV. REPORTS

Tab 11. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury noted the Library Board would not be meeting in September; the next meeting was scheduled for October 9, 2024, at the Ingraham Center.

Chief Coursey noted the first Citizen Police Academy (CPA) would hold an introduction meeting on September 3, 2024, with sixteen (16) participants. Chief Coursey said a graduation banquet would be held on November 12.

Vice Mayor Gamble requested an update on the Seaplane Base Trail Reroute Project. Mr. Tweedie said the project was 75-80% complete.

Tab 12. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Pfister said she was pleased with the direction of the Tavares Library and recreation programs, noting the programs had grown tremendously.

Council Member Price commended the Tavares Library and Recreation department. He said he was happy to see an increase in public participation.

Council Member Price said he was honored to attend the recent Time Capsule Ceremony at the new Public Works facility.

Council Member Singer said attending the Time Capsule Ceremony at the new Public Works facility was a privilege, and his children and grandchildren could enjoy its opening in fifty years.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he attended the Florida League of Cities Annual Conference and enjoyed the opportunity to represent the City. He discussed a new State law regarding radar and cameras in school zones and asked those present to practice caution when driving through school zones.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he was excited about the Tavares Library and Recreation department programs.

Mayor Grenier said he attended the Time Capsule Ceremony at the new Public Works facility. He noted the time capsule was placed in the location of the original Woodlea House.

Mayor Grenier said Rick Cronin would provide a presentation on Lake County Ghost Towns and Phantom Trains on August 2024 at the Tavares History Research Center. He invited those present to attend.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business and Mayor Grenier adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk