



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 18, 2024 – 4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 EAST MAIN STREET, TAVARES**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

**John Drury, City Administrator
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney
Susie Novack, City Clerk
Antonio Fabre, 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, Support Services Director
Sarah Coursey, Police Chief
Phil Clark, Utilities Director**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Tavares High School Chorus opened the meeting with the song Peace on Earth.

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 Jon Carey, First Baptist Church of Umatilla

Pastor Jon Carey, First Baptist Church of Umatilla, 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 asked for the following changes to the Agenda:

- Move and renumber Tab 5, Memorandum of Agreement for the Wekiva Trails – Trails Extension to Tab 2A.
- Move and renumber Tab 3, Resolution 2024-17 – Renewal of Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement (SMAA) for Emergency Management to 8A.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Agenda with changes, seconded by Bob Grenier. 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 ordinances by title only:

RESOLUTION 2024-27

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, RELATING TO THE RENEWAL OF STATEWIDE MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT (SMAA) FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 2, Approval of the December 4, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes, and Tab 2A, Memorandum of Agreement for the Wekiva Rails – Trails Extension], seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 2. Approval to the December 4, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

Tab 2A. Memorandum of Agreement for the Wikiva Rails – Trails Extension

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 4. Fluoride in Drinking Water

Mayor Price introduced Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladipo and invited him to the podium to speak.

An audience member stood up and asked if he could ask the City Attorney if the Surgeon General was for or against fluoride in the water and if he was limited to speaking for three minutes. Mr. Drury said no and stated that the Surgeon General was presenting on behalf of the City Council and not limited to three minutes.

Dr. Ladipo said a Federal Judge recently ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should issue more regulations regarding water fluoridation. The ruling reflected that there were enough studies to show neuropsychiatric risks, among other risks, with fluoridation at higher levels than the United States strives to achieve. Thus, the EPA needed to study current allowable fluoride levels to levels known to cause harm, as the difference in the recommended fluoride level was too close to the limit. He said some people were more sensitive to fluoride levels and noted that the court ruling prompted him to look at the issue more closely.

Dr. Ladipo said many studies he reviewed when researching the topic were conducted by Dr. Ashly Malin, Assistant Professor, College of Public Health and Health Professions and College of Medicine at the University of Florida. He introduced Dr.

Malin, and Dr. Malin provided a PowerPoint presentation on Fluoride and Neurodevelopment with some of the following highlights:

- Said studies show exposure to fluoridated water and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder prevalence among children and adolescents in the United States.
- Noted parents reported higher rates of medically-diagnosed ADHD in their children in states in which a greater proportion of people receive fluoridated water from public water supplies. The relationship between fluoride exposure and ADHD warrants further studies.
- Discussed the article Prenatal Fluoride Exposure and Cognitive Outcomes in Children at 5 and 6-12 Years of Age in Mexico.
- Discussed JAMA Pediatrics Investigation Association Between Maternal Fluoride Exposure During Pregnancy and IQ Scores in Offspring in Canada
- An increase of 0.5 mg/L in water fluoride concentration in infancy was associated with a 9.3- and 6.2-point decrement in Performance IQ among formula-fed and breast-fed children according to JAMA Investigation.
- Discussed National Toxicology Program (NTP), US Department of Health and Human Services Report on the State of Science Concerning Fluoride Exposure and Neurodevelopment and Cognition: A Systematic Review.
 - Comprehensive systematic review of the existing literature on early life fluoride exposure and child neurodevelopment.
 - Focused on human studies and included animal in-vitro studies.
 - 72 total studies on fluoride and IQ.
 - Determined there was a moderate confidence in the body of evidence that estimated fluoride exposure was inversely associated with IQ in children for those living in areas where fluoride in drinking water is known to be at or above 1.5 mg/L.
 - Associations between drinking water fluoride levels below 1.5 mg/L and children's IQ remain "unclear."
 - It is plausible that pregnant women and children living in optimally fluoridated communities could have a total fluoride intake at or above the level of those living in a community with a water fluoride level of 1.5 mg/L.
 - The NTP report highlighted a need for more US-based studies on fluoride and neurodevelopment.
- Discussed potential mechanisms of Neurotoxicity.
- Reviewed the court ruling.
 - The Court found that fluoridation of water at 0.7 milligrams per liter, presently considered optimal in the United States, posed an unreasonable risk of reduced IQ in children.
 - The scientific literature in the record provides a high level of certainty that a hazard is present; fluoride is associated with reduced IQ.
 - There is not enough of a margin of safety between the hazard level and exposure level of fluoride in drinking water for dental caries prevention. (i.e., 0.7 mg/L)

- The EPA's default standard is for there to be at least a factor of 10 between the hazard level and exposure level.
- According to the NTP report, the hazard to child IQ exists at a minimum at 1.5 mg/L.
- According to the EPA's default standard, the fluoride concentration in drinking water would need to be 0.15 mg/L or lower to provide enough of a margin of safety to protect a child's IQ.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Singer asked Dr. Malin how long she had been conducting studies on fluoride. Dr. Malin said about a decade. Council Member Singer referenced Canadian and Mexican studies and asked if more studies needed to be performed in the United States.

Dr. Malin referenced a report summarizing studies up to 2023, except for a study she led. She said the studies determined that there was a hazard or that the association between fluoride exposure and child IQ was inverse. She said a 2017 Mexico study was the first perspective and included relatively low fluoride exposure. At that time more research was needed. Now there is enough consensus that regulatory action needs to be taken. She said that was the opinion of the Federal ruling on September 24, 2024.

Council Member Gamble asked for the base rate of a .5 increase. Dr. Malin said there is generally around a 0.1 difference in the fluoride levels of pregnant women living in fluoridated versus non-fluoridated communities. Council Member Gamble asked how people who live in non-fluoridate-regulated communities with wells maintain fluoride levels. Dr. Malin said some wells were astronomically high, and approximately 3 million people in the United States had water levels exceeding 1.5 mg/L fluoride.

Mayor Price asked Dr. Ladipo, as the Surgeon General of the State of Florida, if it was his opinion that the dangers of fluoride in the water system outweighed the benefits for public health. Dr. Ladipo confirmed.

Council Member Gamble asked if it would be feasible for the City of Tavares to lower the fluoride level from 0.7 to 0.5. Dr. Ladipo said one of the arguments or defenses you hear is that harmful levels are twice as high. However, he hoped Dr. Malin's presentation demonstrated that twice as high levels were still too close to what is known as risky levels. In terms of the argument that if you stop fluoridating, teeth will fall out, the best studies and the American Dental Association estimate a 25% reduction in dental care. Dr. Ladipo said the data did not support the claim that the reduction was due to water fluoridation. Moreover, there was a review in the past 5 to 7 years that raised a question about the current benefit of water fluoridation because so much has changed since the 1970s when most studies were conducted that reflected a benefit. During the 1970s, there was less access to fluoridated toothpaste, and education and knowledge about dental care were less sophisticated. Dr. Ladipo referenced the Cochrane Review, a gold standard resource for systematic reviews, finding that

fluoridation's benefit declined since the 1970s when fluoride toothpaste became more widely available. Dr. Ladipo said he did not believe reducing levels to 0.5 made sense and there may be no safe fluoride levels. He noted the dangers of lead and said the EPA's stance on lead evolved to determine there were no safe levels.

Mayor Price thanked Dr. Ladipo and Dr. Malin for coming to Tavares and sharing their time.

Public Comment

Alice Hoffman, 25205 Cranes Roost Circle, Leesburg, stated she was a health educator. She said Fluoride was a natural element in groundwater and what was being added to the water system was not the same. Ms. Hoffman said Fluoride was not added to clean the water to make it safe to drink. It was added as a medical treatment for everyone, regardless of age, health, or vulnerability. Ms. Hoffman noted she did not support Fluoride in the City's drinking water and asked the Council to stop fluoridating the water in Tavares.

Dr. Maria Claus, 320 W. Burleigh Boulevard, Tavares, said she was an endodontist specializing in root canals and had practiced in Tavares for four years. Dr. Claus noted she supported Fluoride in community water due to the decay, pain, and overuse of antibiotics she had seen in her practice. Dr. Claus noted that root canals were costly, and children would be subject to losing permanent teeth with fluoride removal.

Dr. Johnny Johnson, P.O. Box 2450, Chiefland, Florida, said he was a Pediatric Dentist and supported the Council holding a workshop on the topic. He said the Cochrane Review reflected contemporary studies that showed water fluoridation was effective and, when in place, should not be stopped. He discussed various studies and noted his support for maintaining fluoride in the City water supply.

Dr. Wade Wiker, 728 Boylston Street, Leesburg, said he practiced dentistry in Eustis, Florida, for 29 years. He said he favored maintaining community water fluoridation in Tavares and that the court decision concluded that fluoride could be harmful without certainty. He said the Council should consider waiting for a response from the EPA. Dr. Wiker said he would argue that 0.7% was safe, effective, and closely monitored in Tavares. He said there were dangers with inappropriate concentrations and many health benefits at the proper levels.

Nicole King, 25822 Pinehurst Street, Sorrento, said she was a practicing nurse in Lake County. She said her duties included educating and advocating for communities and providing informed consent. Ms. King asked the Council to vote against continued fluoride in the city's public water. She said all individuals should have the right to choose what medical interventions are presented to them. She said fluoride had been deemed a medical intervention by definition and is prescribed by physicians. While fluoride is good for teeth and can decrease decay, newer data suggests there may be more harm than good as fluoride is a neurotoxin. Ms. King said repeated exposure could cause

central nervous system damage, leading to learning disabilities, memory loss, bone fractures, seizures, and dementia. She said communities must be informed about what is being put into their food and water and be agreeable to such medical interventions, noting chlorine is a treatment for water and fluoride is a treatment for people.

Karen Motley, 2445 Farringdon Drive, Tavares, said she was a registered nurse and felt fluoridation should be a choice and widely available. She said some holistic dentists do not use fluoride and listed many diseases and conditions associated with fluoride intake. Ms. Motley noted the high cost of purchasing a filtration system that would remove fluoride in the water and asked the Council to discontinue its use.

Justin Harvey, 103 S. Osceola Avenue, Orlando, asked the Council to end the practice of water fluoridation. He said it was a medicine added to water and classified as a neurotoxin. He noted several current studies reflecting there were no differences in tooth decay for communities with and without fluoridation.

Elanah Coulson, 1108 Pine Avenue, Tavares, said her granddaughter had a medical condition and could not ingest fluoride. Ms. Coulson's husband then stepped to the podium and said, as a City resident, they did not support fluoride in the City's water supply and noted fluoride was available in toothpaste.

Council Discussion

Council Member Singer thanked the audience members for their comments. He said fluoride was a sensitive topic and noted the tough and heartfelt decisions the Council sometimes had to make. Council Member Singer said he heard a lot of concerns regarding fluoride from his constituents, who view its use as government overreach. He said people were worried about the health risks, including links to cognitive decline. He noted his perspective on the issue has changed over the years, as well as those of the medical profession and government agencies. Council Member Singer said he was elected to represent the entire 20,000 population of the City and to make decisions on their behalf. He said his decision would be made for the community as a whole.

Council Member Grenier said he had been asking Tavares residents for their opinion on fluoride in the water supply for the past few weeks, and his decision would be made based on those comments.

Vice Mayor Pfister said she heard compelling arguments and professional opinions for and against fluoride in the City water. She said fluoride was easily accessible in toothpaste, mouthwash, and bottled water products. She said the Council's responsibility is to provide clean, safe water and was not qualified to make decisions on medical treatment. Vice Mayor Pfister said it was unfair to treat people who did not want to be treated with fluoride and supported removing fluoride from the City water immediately.

Council Member Gamble said that, with a population of over 20,000, he did not have enough input from the residents to decide. He recommended that the item be tabled and placed on a referendum on the November 2025 ballot for the citizens to decide.

Mayor Price said he read studies and felt the dangers of fluoride outweighed the benefits of cavity prevention. He noted that 10 Lake County cities did not use fluoride. Mayor Price said it came down to imposing a drug on citizens who did not ask for it. He discussed the hazards and damage from storing fluoride. He noted other sources to obtain fluoride and said he supported removing it from the City water immediately.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to remove fluoride from City water immediately and turn all remaining bags of fluoride over to hazard waste, seconded by Bob Grenier.

Council Member Singer said he did not disagree with the benefits of fluoride, and most residents he spoke with did not want fluoride in their water.

Council Member Grenier and Mayor Price said most or all Tavares citizens they spoke with or received emails from did not want fluoride in the City water.

The motion carried 4-1 as follows:

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

Tab 6. Sister City

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The Sister City Horizon Team made up of Council Member Bobby Grenier and City Administrator John Drury is seeking the Council's approval to explore recommending a domestic (Within the United States) Sister City for Council's future consideration and approval.

By way of background, the City has two Sister Cities one in Taiwan and one in France. Coordinating and communicating with the sister cities in these foreign countries is challenging due to language barriers and international travel, so it is usually done by resolution and email.

Developing a sister city relationship with a domestic city could provide a more interactive and meaningful opportunity for both cities. The Horizon team seeks

approval from the Council to explore an appropriate city in the United States for the Council's consideration at a future meeting.

Mayor Price said he received one Request to Speak form from Steven Gerard Sidlovsky and invited him to the podium. Mr. Sidlovsky did not respond to the invitation or was not in the audience.

Council Member Grenier said a Tavares resident suggested creating a domestic Sister City to him and noted his support.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to authorize the request to explore a domestic Sister City for the Council's consideration at a future meeting, seconded by Lori Pfister.

Council Member Gamble asked if the request would eliminate the existing Sister Cities. Mr. Drury said no. He said Tavares would look for a Sister City that was not identical yet similar in size. He noted an aviation theme would be positive and that it would be with a City where each could learn and grow from the venture.

Council Member Singer noted his support.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 7. Water Consumptive Use Permit Update

Mr. Clark made the following presentation:

Approximately a year ago, the council was informed that the City was nearing the maximum allotment of drinking water by the SJRWMD. This was due to accelerated growth in the last 3 years. The City has hired an engineer and geologist to process and request a modification of the CUP to accommodate growth. This is typically a two-year process, which should be finalize in 2025.

Mr. Clark introduced Project Manager/Engineer Sean Chaparro of Arcadis U.S., Inc., Engineer Stephanie Bishop of Arcadis U.S. Inc., and Geologist Sara Whitaker, SMW GeoSciences, Inc.

Mr. Chaparro and Ms. Whitaker provided a PowerPoint presentation on the City's Consumptive Use Permit update with the following highlights: Existing CUP, Population Projections, Flow Demand Projections, and Next Steps.

Mr. Drury said the City would continue coordinating with the engineers and geologists to ensure the CUP was on an accelerated program. He said all hands were on deck and noted withdrawals were faster than originally predicted.

Council Member Gamble asked if the City was at its maximum water use. Mr. Clark said 2024 would end slightly under the maximum.

Council Member Gamble inquired about current and future developments. Mr. Drury said future large developments were timing their projects with the CUP permit update.

Council Member Singer thanked everyone for their hard work.

Tab 8. Award and Authorize Contract to Dale Beasley Construction for the Aesop Park Stormwater Improvement Project.

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

On August 3, 2022, the City Council adopted Resolution 2022-15 authorizing acceptance of grant from the Lake County Water Authority in the amount of \$162,500. The grant is a reimbursement grant whereas the grant requires a City Match of \$162,500 for an estimated project cost of \$325,000.

On August 3, 2022, the Mayor executed the agreement for the Lake County Water Authority Grant with \$162,500 in reimbursable funding and a City Match in the amount of \$162,500.

On August 7, 2024, the City Council adopted Resolution 2024-16 which increased the funding amount for the LWCA Grant from \$162,500 to \$280,000. The updated required City Match was increased from \$162,500 to \$268,970.

On September 4, 2024, the Mayor executed the agreement to amend the Lake County Water Authority Grant Amendment which increased the reimbursable funding not to exceed \$280,000, and the City Match increased to \$268,970.

On 1-11-2024, the City of Tavares issued Bid 2024-04 for the Aesop Park Stormwater Pond Improvement project. Staff received two respondents to the bid. Both bids exceeded the project funding amount (1. 974,108.20 and 2. \$679,343.20). Due to the bid amounts exceeding project funding the staff closed the bid, and additional options were explored.

After researching current bids and awards from other local jurisdictions it was found that the City is able to Piggy-Back off a current Bid with Dale Beasley Construction with the City of Winter Garden RFP 21-001 with considerable savings. Winter Garden's companion contract for the bid is valid through January 13, 2026.

The City received a quote from Dale Beasley Construction in the amount of \$387,789.62 for the project. Staff is requesting Council's authorization to award

a contract via Piggy-Back (Winter Garden RFP-21-001), and to authorize staff to negotiate and enter into a contract with Dale Beasley Construction.

Staff recommends Option 1, move to approve and authorize award and execution of Contract to Dale Beasley Construction, utilizing Piggy-Back Provision on Winter Garden RFP-21-001 and Contract for the Aesop Park Stormwater Improvement Project.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Singer asked Ms. Houghton to describe a piggy-back contract for the audience. Ms. Houghton said some bids are deemed non-conforming and significantly above the project budget. When that happens, the Council authorizes Staff to piggyback on a contract from another jurisdiction at a better cost.

Attorney Holt confirmed that State Statutes allow the City to bypass the competitive bidding process by piggybacking on a contract that went through the bidding process by another entity.

Ms. Houghton said piggybacking was a way to save money and time and noted that the opportunity does not always present itself.

Council Member Singer thanked Ms. Houghton for her efforts to save funds. He commended Mr. Dillon and Purchasing Manager Alex Patton for their efforts to secure a piggyback contract.

Council Member Grenier noted his support for the project.

Council Member Singer noted the time savings by piggybacking a contract and asked when the project would begin. Mr. Dillon said as soon as possible if approved.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Option 1, authorizing the award and execution of contract to Dale Beasley Construction, utilizing piggy-back provision on Winter Garden RFP-21-001 and contract for the Aesop Park Stormwater Improvement Project. The motion was seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 8A. Resolution 2024-27 – Renewal of Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement (SMAA) for Emergency Management

Mr. O'Keefe made the following presentation:

The renewal of the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement (SMAA) for Emergency Management authorizes the request, provision, and receipt of inter-jurisdictional

mutual assistance among political subdivisions within the state in accordance with the Emergency Management Act, Chapter 252.

By approving Resolution 2024-27 and renewing the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement will allow the City to maximize the prompt, full, and effective use of outside resources of all participating governments in an emergency or disaster.

Staff recommends Option 1, approve Resolution 2024-27 and authorize the City Administrator to execute the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement.

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

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution 2024-27 [Option 1], seconded by Bob Grenier.

Council Member Singer asked if the Mutual Aid Agreement would include situations such as when the City of Tavares Emergency Operations Center housed the Lake County Emergency Operations Center during Hurricane Debby. Mr. O’Keefe confirmed and provided the background of the storm event that created the downing of an electric grid that affected Lake County’s emergency operations. The City of Tavares was able to step in and provide support. He noted the importance of Mutual Aid agreements for the community.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

XII. OLD BUSINESS

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Michele Pietrowski, 460 Fern Avenue, Tavares, discussed the property located at 475 Fern Avenue and asked if the City would consider creating an ordinance to speed up the removal of garbage in the City. Ms. Pietrowski said she would be willing to purchase speed bumps from Amazon for the City to install on the road to slow traffic.

Steven Gerard Sidlovsky, Lorian, Ohio, recited a bible verse, provided a handout to the City Council with a religious book mark, and discussed Tavares becoming a ‘Personhood City.’

Lois Williams, 408 Fern Avenue, Tavares, said she worked for hospice and noted her concern for trash blowing from 475 Fern Avenue into her yard, which she was then responsible for removing. She stated concern for the beautification of her community and flying debris during a storm event.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 9. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury said the next City Council meeting would be held on January 15, 2025, and noted a list of upcoming meetings and events was provided in the Council's packets.

Tab 10. City Council Member Reports

Vice Mayor Pfister commended the staff for their efforts on the Christmas Parade, and said the comments she witnessed reflected an appreciation for the parade being shortened.

Council Member Grenier inquired about Cookies with Santa. Mr. Dillon said the Recreation Department devised an idea for the program, and 75 children participated.

Council Member Grenier noted he spoke with a Trust for Public Lands representative and was grateful they came down from Tallahassee.

Council Member Grenier commended Solid Waste Manager Jeff Henderson for his help on a recent issue.

Council Member Grenier asked if the Mayor's Youth Council department tours had been scheduled. Ms. Novack said the tours were in the process of being scheduled and no date had been set.

Council Member Grenier said the City's Christmas lights were beautiful.

Council Member Singer said he enjoyed the Christmas parade, and everyone who attended had a great time. He thanked Mr. Clark for driving him in the Christmas parade and those who put the event together.

Council Member Singer recognized the Mayor's Youth Council members in the audience and thanked the Tavares High School Choir for their performance before the meeting.

Council Member Gamble discussed the Christmas parade and said he enjoyed the event. He commended those who trimmed the palm trees and installed the Christmas lights downtown.

The Council Members and Staff wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk