



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 4, 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, Interim Community Development Director
Scott Aldrich, Community Services Director
Bob Tweedie, Economic Development Director
Lori Houghton, Finance Director
Crissy Bublitz, Human Resources Director
James Dillon, Public Works Director
Mark O'Keefe, Public Communications Director
Phil Clark, Utilities Director
Captain Mike Willis, Fire Department
Captain Karl Grogan, Police Department**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Price called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He asked those who wished to speak on an agenda item to complete and submit a Request to Speak form.

Mayor Price introduced the Tavares High School brass band ensemble, which played Christmas music to greet those in attendance and kick off the holiday season.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Tab 1. Pastor Chase Allen, First Baptist Church of Umatilla

Pastor Chase Allen, 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 said the staff had no changes.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Sandy Gamble. 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

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if anyone wished to pull an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 2. Approval of the November 20, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 2. Approval of the November 20, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 3. Discuss Removing Fluoride from Drinking Water

Mayor Price introduced the agenda item with a 7-minute video featuring Dr. Joseph Ladapo, Florida's Surgeon General, discussing fluoride in drinking water.

Public Comment

Dr. Johnny Johnson, PO Box 2450, Chiefland, noted he was a pediatric dentist and said fluoride benefits included a 25-50% reduction in cavities. He gave the Council members a Fluoridation Update from the Australian Dental Association handout. Dr. Johnson noted that one in ten children lived in poverty, and fluoridated water was their only dental prevention and protection. He discussed fluoride statistics in Canada and cities that removed fluoride from their drinking water. Dr. Johnson noted his support for community water fluoridation.

Dr. Wade Winker, 728 Boylston Street, Leesburg, spoke in support of community water fluoridation. He said the City of Leesburg recently opted to put fluoride back into its potable water supply. Dr. Winker said fluoride was the most effective way to deliver fluoride to the community. He asked the Council to keep fluoride in the City's water supply to provide children with a lifetime of dental health.

Dr. Alan Hays, Umatilla, said he practiced dentistry in Umatilla for 27 years and noted he disagreed with Florida Surgeon General Ladapo's stance on fluoride in drinking water. Dr. Hays said the citizens would benefit from fluoride in the water supply as topical fluoride gels were a temporary solution. He noted his support for keeping fluoride in the City's drinking water.

Justin Harvey, 103 South Ocoola, Orlando, said he supported removing fluoride from the City's water supply. He said the incoming Surgeon General, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., would recommend removing fluoride from all water supplies nationwide. Mr. Harvey discussed fluoride side effects such as arthritis, bone, and thyroid issues. He said putting fluoride in drinking water was mass medication without consent. Mr. Harvey noted the dangers of handling fluoride.

Chad Cameron, 1099 Cirton Avenue, Crescent City, said fluoride was not a water treatment issue. He said the chemical was a neurotoxin and discussed its toxicity. He

said including fluoride in City drinking water was not conducive to personal autonomy and freedom, had environmental impacts, and was a waste of resources.

Council Discussion

Council Member Gamble asked for the annual cost to include fluoride in the City's drinking water. Mr. Clark said \$30,000 for the chemical, staff costs, equipment maintenance, laboratory and regulatory costs, and tank depreciation. He confirmed chlorine was also added to the water. Council Member Gamble asked if chlorine could be harmful if ingested in the wrong doses. Mr. Clark confirmed. Council Member Gamble said fluoride benefits children, and if it were monitored in the proper amounts, he would be in support of continuing fluoride.

Council Member Singer inquired about the City's fluoride levels. Mr. Clark said the City consistently maintains .7 parts per million; the maximum level is 2 to 4 parts per million. He said the water was tested daily and monthly in a certified lab, and fluoride was highly regulated. Council Member Singer said he reviewed studies that indicated too much fluoride was unhealthy and noted municipalities could regulate efficiently, which would benefit underserved areas.

Council Member Grenier said he would support a public workshop to hear more from the residents. He noted utilizing fluoride was a health and safety issue and felt more community input was needed.

Vice Mayor Pfister said she would support tabling the discussion to allow the Council to conduct additional research as valid comments were made for and against fluoride use in drinking water. She asked for further information to be provided by staff.

Mayor Price said three of the 14 Lake County cities had fluoridated water: Tavares, Eustis, and Umatilla. He said Leesburg recently voted to incorporate fluoride in its water. Mayor Price said he supported the Florida Surgeon General's recommendation and that the citizens were getting a lot of fluoride exposure from drinking, cooking, and bathing with fluoridated water. He noted his support for removing fluoride from the City's drinking water.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to Table to the December 18, 2024, City Council meeting, seconded by Bob Grenier.

Council Member Singer said the Council discussed fluoride in the City's water four years ago. He did not wish for a rash reaction. He said he would like to review studies for and against fluoride so the Council could make a more educated decision.

Vice Mayor Pfister said she would like additional information and asked for the data to be sent through the City.

Council Member Gamble noted his support for a decision to be tabled at the next meeting on January 15, 2025. Vice Mayor Pfister said she would like to move forward with the discussion at the next meeting.

The motion carried 4-1 as follows:

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

Mr. Drury asked those in the audience to forward any information and studies regarding fluoride to the City Clerk, who would then provide the information to the Council members.

Mr. Hays noted fluoride is above chloride on the periodic table and said the proper amount would provide a lifetime of benefits.

Tab 4. Tavares Public Library – Happy and Healthy Holiday Series

Rebecca Campbell, Library Director, made the following presentation:

From meditation and karaoke to cooking and budgeting, the Tavares Public Library team has curated a slate of programs designed to keep library patrons at their happiest and healthiest during the holiday season, including the following free programs:

- *Budgeting for the Holidays*
- *Spices and Teas*
- *Aromatherapy for Stress Relief*
- *Tai Chi for the Holidays*
- *Offline Project: Holiday Edition*
- *Christmas Karaoke*
- *Sounds of the Season with Troy Harris*
- *Winter Solstice Concert*
- *Picture Opportunities with Winter Themed Backdrop*
- *Free Gift Wrapping Station*
- *Cookie Crafters*
- *Santa Story Time*
- *Toys for Tots Donation Site*
- *Tavares Police Charity Toy Drive Site*

Tab 5. Tavares Recreation Department – Fall Program Update

Pete Sherrard, Deputy Director of Recreation, provided the following presentation:

The City of Tavares Recreation Department hosted a number of activities for the fall with the following highlighted programs:

- *Tavares Youth Soccer League*
- *Tavares Babe Ruth League*
- *Full STEAM Ahead Educational Program*
- *Homeschool Programs*
- *Tavares BOO! Festival*
- *Tiny Tots Soccer*
- *Little Sluggers Baseball*
- *Kinder Cooks Partner Program with TLC – Toddlers of Lake County*
- *Senior Programs*
- *Adult Co-Ed Softball*

Tab 6. Update on Rails to Trails Project

Mr. Dillon made the following presentation:

In January 2023, the City received unexpected news from CSX regarding their decision not to sell the 11.5-mile corridor. As a result, Lake County, Mount Dora, and the City of Tavares agreed to pause any grant applications until CSX reached a definitive conclusion. During this interim period, the unwavering commitment of Lake County, Mount Dora, and the City of Tavares has been vital in keeping the initiative alive. Our collaboration efforts have led to completing the Planning, Development, and Environmental Study (PDE) for Segment 5, finalized in August 2024. Furthermore, the Lake Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (LSMPO) has included both segments of the trail in their 2024 list of priority projects, reinforcing our project's progress and potential for future success.

Tavares has received confirmation from the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public access to outdoor recreation. It has been confirmed that CSX and Florida Central Railroad are willing to sell the corridor and associated lands. At an upcoming meeting on December 18, the Trust for Public Lands and City staff will present the Memorandum of Agreement for the Council's consideration. The agreement will outline the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in developing the corridor as a Rails to Trails project. This development has strategically positioned us to apply for the 2025 RAISE Grant. In response to this positive progression, Lake County, Mount Dora, and Tavares have developed a comprehensive scope of work with Kimley Horn to assist in preparing and submitting the application and ready task orders.

If the Council has no objections to pursuing the RAISE Grant application and taking advantage of this opportunity, it will require a total investment of \$36,000. The amount would be shared equally among Lake County, Mount Dora, and the City of Tavares with each agency contributing \$12,000. The City's proportionate share of \$12,000 is budgeted and will come from the Department of Public Works engineering budget.

Mr. Drury noted that the RAISE Grant is for \$25 million to complete the trail from downtown Tavares to downtown Mount Dora.

Council Member Singer said serving on the Rails to Trails Project Horizon Team was a pleasure. He said it was great news that CSX would relinquish the property and thanked Mr. Dillon for his efforts. Council Member Singer said he fully supported the project, as it would benefit the community and be an economic driver.

Mayor Price thanked Mr. Dillon for the update.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

XII. OLD BUSINESS

Council Member Grenier asked for an update on the cemetery gate. Mr. Dillon said the cemetery gate was damaged during Hurricane Milton, and the contractor should complete the repairs by the end of the following week.

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Gary Santoro, Royal Harbor, said he was not concerned and would not be affected by the outcome of the fluoride discussion. He said any chemical was bad if the manufacturing instructions were not followed. He thanked and commended Mr. Clark for information on the City's fluoride chemicals and levels.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 7. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury noted the following two City Council meetings would be held on December 18, 2024, and January 15, 2025, with no meeting scheduled for January 1, 2025.

Mr. Clark thanked Mr. Santoro for his kind words.

Captain Mike Willis introduced Lee Cheney, Fire Inspector, to the Tavares Team. He provided a brief history of his professional career and accomplishments.

Mr. Aldrich said the Candyland Christmas Celebration and Parade would be held on December 7. The event would be kicked off at 5:00 p.m. with a Christmas parade on Ruby Street and Main Street, followed by activities and entertainment in Wooton Park.

Tab 8. City Council Member Reports

Vice Mayor Pfister noted the Regional Park and Rails to Trails projects and asked the Council if they would entertain discussing hiring a lobbying firm on the next agenda.

Council Member Singer noted his support.

Mayor Price said there were no objections from the Council.

Council Member Singer said he looked forward to the Candyland Christmas Celebration and Parade. He said he would ride in the parade with Mr. Clark and looked forward to seeing families and the community come together.

Council Member Singer asked if the boardwalk was completed. Mr. Tweedie said the trail bypass through the Seaplane Base was open and well received by the public. He said a final walk-through would take place the following day.

Vice Mayor Pfister recognized the Mayor's Youth Council members in the audience. Mr. Drury said the Mayor's Youth Council members selected the departments they wished to shadow, and tours would be scheduled over the next few weeks.

Mayor Price said he looked forward to the Candyland Christmas Celebration and Parade.

Those present welcomed Mr. Cheney to the Tavares Team.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:24 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk