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TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 19, 2025 – 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

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 Fred Boone, Director of Pastoral Care for Waterman Village, Mount Dora

Chaplain Joshua Douglas of the Lake County Sheriff's Office provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance in the absence of Pastor Fred Boone.

Mayor Price welcomed Mayor's Youth Council members Kane Rogers Buigas, Mitchell Garcia, and Kelly Lopez, shadowing their paired Council members at the dais.

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

Tab 2. Proclamation – Irish American Heritage Month

Mayor Price read a Proclamation dedicating March 2025 as Irish American Heritage Month in the City of Tavares.

MOTION

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

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 and resolutions by title only:

RESOLUTION 2025-04

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES CITY COUNCIL, LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA; AUTHORIZING THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR TO SUBMIT, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA, AND THE CITY OF MOUNT

DORA, TO SUBMIT A 2025 BETTER UTILIZING INVESTMENTS TO LEVERAGE DEVELOPMENT (BUILD) GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE WEKIVA TRAIL EXTENSION PROJECT – SEGMENT 1 AND SEGMENT 5 TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION; AUTHORIZING THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR OR DESIGNEE TO EXECUTE SUPPLEMENTS TO THE APPLICATION; 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

Bob Grenier moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 3. Approval of the February 5, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 3. Approval of the February 5, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab. 4. Resolution 2025-04 – BUILD GRANT

Mr. Dillon made the following presentation:

> *On January 15, 2025, Council approved the RASIE Grant Resolution 2025-01 for a Rails To Trails grant (The Wekiva Trail Segment 1 and 5), which authorized staff, in partnership with Lake County and City of Mount Dora, to submit to the Department of Transportation (DOT) a $25 million 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The application was submitted ahead of the January 21, 2025 deadline date.*
>
> *On January 24, 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued Amendment 1 which in essence changed the name of the grant from RAISE to the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant amongst other changes.*
>
> *In light of the recent U.S. Department of Transportation amendment, it is recommended the Council approve the enclosed BUILD Resolution, which accurately reflects the name change and other associated Grant changes. The requested Grant amount of $25 million remains the same.*

Staff recommends Option 1, for the Council to move to Approve U.S. DOT Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Grant Resolution No. 2025-04 for the planned Wekiva Trail Extension Project - Segment 1 and Segment 5.

Mayor Price thanked Mr. Dillon for his hard work.

MOTION

Troy Singer, moved to Approve [Accept grant name change and Resolution 2025-04], seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Council Member Pfister said she had complete faith that Mr. Dillon would see the project through.

Council Member Gamble commended Mr. Dillon for informing the Council during his recent trip to Tallahassee. He said Mr. Dillon was an outstanding employee.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 5. State of the City

Mayor Price made the following presentation:

In years past, the Tavares Chamber would put on its annual Chamber GALA and invite the Mayor and City Administrator to present a State of The City address. Now that the Chamber no longer hosts a Chamber GALA, a State of The City Address has not been conducted. An opportunity is provided to discuss having the Mayor and City Administrator present a State of The City Address at a City Council meeting 1/2 way through the Fiscal Year before the budgetary process commences. Either the first or second meeting in April.

Council Member Price noted that the Tavares Chamber of Commerce indicated they would provide an opportunity for Mayor Price and Mr. Drury to give a State of the City address at the annual Chamber Gala. He asked the Council for their comments.

A discussion was held about having the State of the City address at a regular Council meeting, a stand-alone Council meeting, the Chamber of Commerce Gala, at locations other than the Council Chambers, and including the address in the City newsletter.

There was a consensus from the Council to insert the State of the City Address in the City newsletter and provide the address in person at the Tavares Chamber of Commerce Gala.

<u>Tab 6. Strategic Growth Plan</u>

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

> *As Central Florida and Tavares continues to grow at its current pace, developing a Strategic Growth Plan that addresses traffic, residential sub-divisions, open space, natural habitat, public infrastructure and economic strength would provide a road map for the community and the City Council to refer to when addressing traffic, sub-divisions, open space, natural habitat, public infrastructure and economic strength. Staff seeks approval to obtain a proposal from an industry expert firm who specializes in developing Community Strategic Growth Plans. The proposal and costs would be brought back to the City Council for consideration.*
>
> *Staff recommends Option 1, for the Council to authorize staff to obtain a Strategic Growth Planning Services proposal and cost for Council's future consideration.*

Mr. Drury noted the Council completed the City's Comprehensive Plan through 2040, which included growth planning. He said there was an opportunity for the Council to take the Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, and City zoning to create an overlaying Strategic Growth Plan. There would be public meetings, including the Council, Planning and Zoning Board, and Community Development staff, where discussions would be held on where or where not growth should be developed. Mr. Drury said that when a new developer approaches the City, the Council could ask staff if the project aligns with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations and fits within the City's strategic plan. He said it would be another layer to help the Council's approval process.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Singer asked how a Strategic Growth Plan differed from the Smart Growth workshops hosted by Lake County. Mr. Drury said it was a derivative of those workshops. He said he would bring back a proposed cost, and then several public meetings would be held with the Public, the Planning and Zoning Board, and the Council. He said the process would take nine months to a year to complete. Mr. Drury said the same method was used with the Downtown Master Plan, which took two years. He noted that creating the Master Plan turned a vacant downtown into a vibrant one.

Council Member Singer noted his support.

Vice Mayor Pfister inquired about the Comprehensive Plan and felt the City's growth was addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Drury said there had been recent projects that came forward that the Board was uncomfortable with. He noted the Comprehensive Plan may no longer be consistent with the Board's goals, and creating a Strategic Growth Plan could educate citizens on the Comprehensive Plan, what the Council voted on, and what changes the Council would like to make. If there was a shift from when the Comprehensive Plan was voted, then the Comprehensive Plan may need to be amended as well. The Comprehensive Plan addressed all development that would occur until 2040.

Council Member Singer said he would prefer to live in a growing City, and problems arise when people start moving out.

Vice Mayor Pfister said the City's infrastructure could not handle growth on the west side of town. Mr. Drury said the Strategic Growth Plan workshops would include conversations and input from the residents and the business community.

Council Member Gamble asked if the infrastructure on the west side, as described, was the roads or other infrastructure. Vice Mayor Pfister said the entire infrastructure and noted the streets could not support additional traffic.

Mayor Price supported receiving a cost for consideration and said the goals of the Strategic Growth Plan should be included.

Council Member Grenier said he concurred with Council Member Pfister and Mayor Price.

Mr. Drury said staff could provide the Council with a cost estimate and scope of work for consideration.

MOTION

Council Member Singer moved to authorize staff to obtain the cost for a strategic grown plan and bring back to the Council [Option 1], seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 7. Citizen’s Police Academy 25-01

Chief Coursey provided an overview of an upcoming Citizen’s Police Academy (Academy). She said the Academy provides Tavares resident participants an insight into law enforcement-related procedures, policies, and guidelines the Police Department operates within to provide the citizens and visitors Police protection services. Chief Coursey said the Academy would begin March 18, 2025, and last ten weeks. She noted that the Academy filled up within one week, with Mayor Price being one of the participants.

Mayor Price said he looked forward to attending the Citizen's Police Academy.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

Vice Mayor Pfister noted Kim Paulling was the first Tavares High School program administrator for the Mayor's Youth Council (MYC) and a strong program proponent. She said Kaley Paulling, Kim Paulling's daughter, was in the first MYC group. Vice Mayor Pfister said Ms. Paulling's husband recently passed away, and she had a condolence card for the Council members to sign.

Council Member Singer said Ms. Paulling was a driving force for the program when she was the MYC program administrator for Tavares High School.

Council Member Singer said he would like to add a tour of City Hall to the Mayor's Youth Council program. Mr. Drury said he could add a tour to the curriculum.

XII. OLD BUSINESS

Vice Mayor Pfister asked for an update on the Impact Fee Study. Ms. Houghton said the staff received the first draft of the report and would be providing a copy to Mr. Drury for his review.

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 8. City Administrator Report

Chief Coursey said the Eustis Elks Lodge No. 1578 selected Sergeant Dana Scola as Officer of the Year. She noted Sergeant Scola manages the Tavares Police Department charity.

Mr. Tweedie noted Planes, Tunes & BBQ would be held on Friday, February 28, and Saturday, March 1, 2025. He said the event would include music, vendors, food, a water ski show, and a drone show, among other entertainment and activities.

Council Member Grenier inquired about a donated ADA boat lift. Mr. Tweedie said the Lake Leadership Class of 2024 donated an ADA lift, which had been accepted and installed.

Chief Keith said the Eustis Elks Lodge No. 1578 selected Engineer George Gernand as Firefighter of the Year.

Mr. Aldrich said the Babe Ruth Spring Opening Day would be held on Saturday, March 1, at the Woodlea Sports Complex. He noted that invitations had been provided to the Council.

Tab 9. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Singer said he looked forward to Planes, Tunes & BBQ, and the Babe Ruth opening day.

Council Member Gamble said he looked forward to the Babe Ruth opening day.

Council Member Gamble commended Mr. Dillon and said all department directors go above and beyond to achieve funding for projects and equipment. He said the citizens do not realize how much work the directors put in after hours and noted his appreciation.

Mitchell Garcia thanked the Council for restarting the Mayor's Youth Council. He said he enjoyed shadowing the Public Works and Community Development Departments. He said his takeaway was all the work and effort it took to keep the City moving forward.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully,

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Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk