



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 19, 2022 – 4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 EAST MAIN STREET, TAVARES**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

**Lori Pfister, Mayor
Walter Price, Vice Mayor
Amanda Boggus, Council Member
Sandy Gamble, Council Member
Troy Singer, Council Member**

STAFF PRESENT

**John Drury, City Administrator
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney
Susie Novack, City Clerk
Scott Aldrich, Community Services Director
Crissy Bublitz, Human Resources Director
James Dillon, Public Works Director
Mike Fitzgerald, Community Development Director
Lori Houghton, Finance Director
Richard Keith, Fire Chief
Stoney Lubins, Police Chief
Mark O'Keefe, Public Communications Director
Bob Tweedie, Economic Development Director**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pfister called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Tab 1. Pastor Brooks Braswell, Umatilla Baptist Church

Pastor Brooks Braswell, Umatilla Baptist Church, provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Pfister asked for changes to the Agenda. There were none.

MOTION

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

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. Proclamation – 2022 Arbor Day

Mayor Pfister read a proclamation in its entirety declaring January 21, 2022, as City of Tavares Arbor Day.

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

Attorney Holt said there were no quasi-judicial matters before the Council.

VI. READING OF ALL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS INTO THE RECORD

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

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

Council Member Gamble said he would like to pull Tab 5 for discussion.

MOTION

Council Member Gamble moved to approve Tabs 3 and 4 on the Consent Agenda [Tab 3. Approval of the December 15, 2021, Tavares City Council Regular Meeting Minutes; and Tab 4. Approval of the 2022 City Council Meeting Dates], seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 3. Approval of the December 15, 2021 Tavares City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

Tab 4. Approval of the 2022 City Council Meeting Dates

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

Tab 5. Eagle Homes at Tavares – Preliminary Plat

Council Member Gamble said the Lake County School Board has a portable building that encroaches on the right-of-way and noted his concern that the project would affect the structure and surrounding School Board parking. Mr. Fitzgerald said bollards would be moved and reinstalled by three lots and not affect the Lake County School Board property. He provided PowerPoint images of the site and said there would be no interference with the portable or current function of the Lake County School Board. Mr. Fitzgerald said that when the School Board redevelops their property or moves, road access would then be extended from Joanna to U.S. 441. Mr. Dillon confirmed garbage trucks would have ample room to turn with the proposed road configuration.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Consent Agenda Tab 5 [Eagle Homes at Tavares – Preliminary Plat], seconded by Amanda Boggus. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 6. Board Appointment – Police Pension Board

Mayor Pfister made the following presentation:

The Tavares Police Pension Board consists of five (5) members. Two members are appointed by the Mayor and ratified by the City Council, two members are appointed by the Police Pension Board, and the 5th trustee seat is a joint appointment. The Police Pension Board elected Eric Filkin to continue serving in the 5th Trustee seat for the term December 2021 through November 2023, and is requesting the City Council ratify their selection.

MOTION

Amanda Boggus moved to approve [the appointment of Eric Filkin to the 5th Trustee Seat to the Police Pension Board], seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 7. Cagan Management Group Offer to Purchase City Property

Mr. Tweedie made the following presentation:

The Cagan Management Group Inc. has submitted the attached letter of intent requesting to purchase the 6.7-acre parcel of City-owned property located on E. Caroline Street (Alt Key # 13739334) with the intent of developing, constructing, and operating a market-rate townhome community on the property. Cagan presently owns and manages the 480 unit Atwater rental apartment community off of Hufstettler Drive in Tavares (behind Waterman Hospital) which they have developed and built in phases within the past 5 years. Atwater is presently at full capacity with a waiting list.

This property has been owned by the City for several years and has most recently been identified and considered for possible development and operation by the City as a pocket R.V. park to support tourism and special events in the downtown entertainment district and surrounding area. This project is currently identified in the City 5-year Capital Improvement Plan. It has not been funded through the annual budgeting process thus far. The estimated cost of development/construction for the preliminary phase of the R.V. park project is \$250,000.

The Cagan Management Group has submitted a proposed purchase price of \$211,700.00 for the parcel which is presently valued at \$20,100 by the Lake County Property Appraiser.

If Council accepts this letter of intent, staff will hire an appraisal firm to conduct a full appraisal on the property and the final purchase and sale contract would be negotiated and presented to Council for final acceptance subject to that property appraisal report.

The City Attorney has opined that under State Statute and the City Charter it is legal for the City to sell real property based on an unsolicited offer without conducting a request for proposals (RFP) process.

Mr. Tweedie provided PowerPoint images of projects the Cagan Management Group completed in the past.

Vance Jochim, 12619 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake County, recommended Council direct staff to obtain an appraisal and publicly bid the property to determine value. He said the agenda item did not include enough information for the public.

Mayor Pfister asked for comments from the Council.

Vice Mayor Price asked how many units would be included in the project.

Bryan Cagan, Director of Asset Management, Cagan Management Group, Inc., said the project is preliminary and anticipates between 50 to 60 townhomes on the site.

Vice Mayor Price asked for the average anticipated living area. Mr. Cagan said the townhomes are between 1,300 and 1,500 square feet. He said they would like to incorporate detached garages with alley access and rear yards, space permitting, and would depend on the site layout, zoning, retention, and setbacks.

Vice Mayor Price said multi-family is a better use for the site than an RV park as there are apartments and condominiums in the area. He said he supports the Letter of Intent provided an appraisal is obtained.

Council Member Singer asked for the time frame to build and occupy if approved. Mr. Cagan said the project would take 18 to 24 months from start to finish with an approved site, barring any Covid supply chain delays. Council Member Singer said there is a need for market-price homes and noted his preference to move as quickly as possible. Mr. Cagan said their goal is to complete the project as soon as possible.

Council Member Gamble asked if the townhomes would be stick or block built. Mr. Cagan said barring any requirement, the buildings would be stick, and noted wind requirements may impact the build.

Council Member Boggus asked if the property was advertised for sale. Mr. Tweedie said the request was an unsolicited proposal from the Cagan Management Group. Council Member Boggus asked if the property had been advertised or received interest in the property in the past. Mr. Tweedie said not that he was aware. He said the City received a legal opinion from the City Attorney, who stated an unsolicited proposal could be considered by the Council. The City has no legal, state statute, or City charter requirement to go through a bid or Request for Proposal.

Vice Mayor Price asked for the price range of the proposed townhomes. Mr. Cagan said pricing would be premature, and according to Atwater market data, they are anticipated to be slightly more expensive and would be market dictated upon completion. Vice Mayor Price asked if a traffic study would be completed. Mr. Cagan said all requirements would be performed.

Council Member Singer asked Mr. Tweedie for his professional opinion if a pocket park or townhomes would be better at the location regarding economic development. Mr. Tweedie said that absent an economic impact study, his professional opinion is the proposed use would have a more robust economic impact given the need for the housing product to support the community workforce and the customer base for businesses on a consistent basis. He said apartment buildings are the future office

spaces with increased remote working. He confirmed the project would be compatible with the surrounding area. Council Member Singer said the Cagan Management Group does a great job, and there is a current waiting list at Atwater. He asked if there would be a draw from City services. Mr. Drury said no as the City was already servicing the area.

Council Member Singer asked if funds from the project could go into Reserves, road paving, or lower the millage rate. Mr. Drury said the Council will re-appropriate those revenues to what is believed to be in the City's best interest, and all of those items would be eligible.

Council Member Boggus asked if there was anything to prevent the City from getting more than the property's appraisal value. Mr. Drury said no. Council Member Boggus if better offers could be gained if the City advertised the property for sale. Mr. Drury confirmed and noted it would send a message to the private sector and business community that the City may bid out entrepreneurial ideas. He said that would put a damper on the collaborative efforts the City tries to have with the business community, entrepreneurs, and creative entities. He said he believes that the Florida Legislature did not require cities to bid out when private enterprise comes to the government with a good and innovative idea.

Mayor Pfister asked if the project would create water pressure issues. Mr. Drury said no. Mayor Pfister noted her support and said the project would fill a void needed in the City. While she likes the RV park, she said the proposed project makes more sense.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve, seconded by Troy Singer.

Council Member Singer asked if negotiations could include a time frame to complete the project or convert the property back to the City. Mr. Drury said staff could work with the Cagan Management Group.

Council Member Boggus asked if any part of the project would be subsidized housing. Mr. Cagan said no, and the project would be market rate.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 8. Establish FY 2023 Broad Budget Priorities

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

It has been the practice of the Council to set the broad budget priorities for the City Administrator to use as guiding principles in developing a budget that is commensurate with the Council's collective overall budgetary goals.

By way of background, the City operates six (6) governmental operations as follows:

1. **General Government** (revenues derived from property taxes, other taxes, and fees)
2. **Utilities** - Water, Waste Water (Sewer), Reclaimed Water, Stormwater (Revenues derived from fees – no property taxes)
3. **Solid Waste (Garbage Collection)** (revenues derived from fees – no property taxes)
4. **Seaplane Base and Marina Enterprise** (revenues derived from fuel sales, prop shop sales, rental income from Seaplane operator and Marina Slip leases, the General Fund (taxes) and CRA TIF Fund (Incremental property tax revenues within the CRA District).
5. **Pavilion on the Lake Events Venue**. (revenues derived from rental income and General Fund taxes)
6. **Capital Projects**. (revenues are derived from grants like ARPA funds, impact fees, special tax revenues like “Infrastructure Sales Tax” and property taxes).

(Note: in addition to the above are debt service costs associated with prior capital projects)

The cost to provide the citizens governmental services, when benchmarked against other communities of similar size in Florida, reveals Tavares comes out on top in terms of efficiencies. For example, the number of employees per capita for various services offered like police and fire protection which make up a significant part of any city's General Fund budget is lower than cities of comparable size. This “lean” approach carries across all of Tavares governmental services.

At this early point in time, it is not possible to predict with precision the actual revenue or expenses that will occur for the Fiscal Year 2023 (Beginning October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023) because the city does not know:

1. How many new properties have been added to the tax rolls nor how much property values will increase? (The Property Appraiser issues the report in May 2022).
2. What the State shared revenues will be? (State sets this in June 2022)
3. What the increased operational cost will be? (fuel, electricity, healthcare, payroll, etc. – staff bases this on economic indicators)

However, “possible” scenarios for the purpose of starting the discussion on the Council's broad budget priorities based on staff following trends and conducting the research could result in the following possible budget scenarios:

Revenues:

1. *Property Tax revenue collections increasing due to an increase in property values and new construction.*
2. *All other revenues increased over the current year due to positive economic conditions.*

Expenses:

1. *Personnel expenses increasing*
2. *Operational expense increasing due to increased cost of goods and services*
3. *Employee healthcare costs increasing*

Tax Rate: *Tavares has maintained a steady and incremental reduction in the property tax rate over the past several years as it balances the increased cost of delivering services and providing new services by setting a reasonable property tax rate to support these increased costs and new services.*

FY19 - 7.1119 millage rate

FY20 - 6.9500 millage rate

FY21 – 6.9000 millage rate

FY22 – 6.7579 millage rate

Mr. Drury said the agenda backup material includes information on over 22 projects and 30 initiatives currently being managed and implemented throughout the community. He asked the Council to consider and deliberate some of the following items:

- Maintain or not maintain a similar level of service
- Adding or not adding new programs and services
- Capital programs
- Tax rates, reserves, debt, and grants
- Employee compensation

He said he looks for broad budget priorities and goals. Mr. Drury said once the Council's broad budget priorities and goals are identified, he would work with the Department Directors to create a budget in sync with the City Administrator and Council. A budget would be brought back to the Council for public workshops, with adoption once fully vetted in September 2022.

The Council identified the following Broad Budget Priorities:

Council Member Boggus

Council Member Boggus said she would like to focus on the following projects for the next budget cycle:

- Maintain momentum on the Public Works Facility and continue to work toward acquiring additional grants.
- Move forward with Wooton Wonderland and Splash Park renovations.
- Continue benchmarking and provide benchmarking information available to assist Council in making decisions.
- Continue with the Police Department accreditation, which will provide additional grant opportunities.
- Continue to work toward a Fire Department Paramedic Program to help the most people possible as most Fire Department calls are medical-related.
- Continue momentum for paving City streets and for faster completion.
- Continue to move forward with the Neptune 360 and Base Read Program for the maintenance of water meters, to identify leaks quicker, and provide more remote access to employees.
- Maintain the same level of service
- Aim to keep the tax rate going in the same direction it has been going.
- Staff should be considered for an increase if able.
- Continue pursuing grants, including the firm that assists with Federal grants.
- Continue to work on the Tavares Nature Park dock, with ADA accessibility and a boardwalk that ties the parking lot for visitor access. And, continue to pursue a CDBG grant.

Council Member Singer

- Continue to lower the City's millage rate.
- Maintain the same level of service for the business community and residents.
- Ensure road paving is well funded and seek grants to continue to improve roads
- Fair employee compensation.
- Continue working on capital and all projects mentioned by Council Member Boggus and finish projects and initiatives that have started.

Council Member Gamble

- Maintain the same level of service.
- Compensate employees.
- Noted a preference for a conservative approach when considering adding or not adding programs or services that are not self-sufficient.
- Concurred with Council comments regarding capital programs.
- Suggested working with the County to install sidewalks on the west side of Lakeshore Drive to the hospital. He said some of the property is not annexed in the City and may require a joint effort.
- When designing capital projects, review lay-up wall vs. prefab wall vs. block or brick costs.

- Noted reduced vehicle visibility at the Chris Daniels Memorial on Old 441 when turning right on SR19. Mr. Drury said FDOT is currently working on two projects in the area, and the City would ask them to review the area.
- Continue to move forward with the Wooton Park and the Splash Park projects.
- Continue to move forward with the Police Department accreditation.
- Continue to move forward with a Fire Department Paramedic Program.

Council Member Gamble said unbudgeted projects should be reviewed differently.

Vice Mayor Price

- Noted a preference for the rollback rate on the millage if possible. If not possible, continue lowering the millage rate.
- Continue or accelerate debt repayment.
- Continue the same level of service, maintain what we have, and did not see a need for new services.
- Continue more road paving.
- Continue to pursue grants.
- Try to increase reserves.
- Start West Main Street Gateway improvements.

Vice Mayor Price said he received a citizen suggestion to keep the blue and white Christmas lights up year-round on the palm trees at the Chris Daniels Memorial Fountain

Mayor Pfister

- Continue quality of life initiatives, including recreation and Wooton Park.
- Complete docks at the Tavares Nature park, find funds, or pursue grants.
- Noted the Library Expansion Project is winding down.
- Attain and move forward with the YMCA
- Volleyball Court lighting and possibly add another court
- Complete a study on downtown lighting.
- Maintain the same level of service.
- Employee compensation.
- More road paving.
- Rollback millage or reduction in millage.
- Technology advancement for efficiency in public business.

Vance Jochim, 12619 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake County, commended Mr. Drury and staff for providing details in the agenda packet. He made the following comments:

- Recommended postponing projects and going to the rollback rate or more than the rollback rate.
- Noted his support of the Community Police Program
- Noted his support for Tavares Nature Park dock upgrades

- Said a cap should be placed on the 2022 budget.
- Said the Public Works building should be built with tilt-up walls.
- Asked that the benchmarking report be posted to the City website as well as three-year performance metrics tied to specific managers responsible for those cost centers.

Mr. Jochim provided a 'talking point' handout to the Council.

Mr. Drury said he had the information needed to craft a budget and bring it to Council in the spring.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Pfister said the Lake County Board of County Commissioners were planning a joint group meeting with all municipalities on February 7, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at Venetian Center located in Leesburg. She invited those present to attend.

XII. OLD BUSINESS

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Vance Jochim, 12619 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake County, discussed a Lake County School Board concurrency map depicting current projects throughout Lake County. He said he believed the City relies on traffic analysis reports paid and provided by developers that may be biased and suggested the Community Development Department hire traffic engineers with developers reimbursing costs to the City.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 9. City Administrator Report

City Administrator

- Said Bringing Everyone Together To Embrace Race Relations (B.E.T.T.E.R.) would be holding a meeting on January 25, 2022, at 4:00 p.m. He thanked Pastor Watkins for coordinating the meeting.
- Noted a Central Florida Film Festival three-day event over the upcoming weekend at the Epic Theater in Mount Dora. He said local theater groups would present short films during the festival.
- Noted the Smart Growth Horizon Team recently met, would formulate workshops with the community, and bring updates to the Council in the future.

Mr. Fitzgerald referred to Mr. Jochim's comments during Audience to be Heard. He said the traffic studies the City receives are routed to Griffey Engineering to review, including methodology, and brings those comments back to the City on behalf of the City. He noted Mr. Griffey's specialty is traffic engineering.

Tab 10. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Gamble

- Said the sidewalks down Lakeshore Drive should be reviewed.
- Said the roundabout needs lighting at Sinclair

Council Member Gamble made the following comments on the Lake Francis project:

- Asked when the Lake Francis would be completed.
- Said it was his understanding asphalt would be placed on the roads and has not seen progress since December.
- Asked that potholes be included in the final inspection to ensure no potholes remain.
- Said residents had voiced concern that the construction company digs in areas already completed, and it appears repetitive repairs are slowing the project.
- Said future contracts should include a provision that damages made by the contractor would be handled at the time damage was made.
- Said the entrance lift approved by the Council in December was not completed.

Council Member Gamble asked for the status of the Woodlea infrastructure project for 16 homes. He said the homes do not have services the City should be providing.

Council Member Singer

- Said he enjoyed the Rhythm on Ruby event on January 8, 2022, and the event was well-received. He suggested more advertising and marketing of the event, including wayfinding signs.
- Said he could not attend the Arbor Day event and understood everyone had a great time. He said he would like to see the program continue.
- Said he attended the Library Expansion Ribbon cutting. He said the ribbon cutting was great for the community, and those who attended enjoyed the event.

Council Member Boggus

- Said she is happy to be back and wished those present a Happy New Year.
- Said she could not attend the Arbor Day event and did enjoy the 11 Days of Trees program. She thanked Mr. O'Keefe and Mr. Dillon and said their efforts built a lot of interest.
- Said the Public Works building has already programmed tilt walls which is efficient and functional.

Vice Mayor Price

- Said he enjoyed the Arbor Day event and commended the staff.

- Said he enjoyed the Library Ribbon Cutting event and the expansion was a beautiful addition.

Mayor Pfister

- Said she could not attend the Arbor Day event and heard it was a great event.
- Said she enjoyed the Library Ribbon Cutting event, and it was well attended.

Mayor Pfister said she appreciates Mr. Clark and the Utilities Department Staff for their efforts at Lake Francis. She said she is confident Mr. Clark and staff would complete the job correctly and noted workers were present at the entrance at 8:00 p.m. recently.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business and Mayor Pfister adjourned the meeting at 5:17 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk