



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 1, 2023 – 4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 EAST MAIN STREET, TAVARES**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

**John Drury, City Administrator
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney
Susie Novack, City Clerk
Mike Fitzgerald, 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 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 Morgan Flagler, First Baptist Church of Tavares

Pastor Morgan Flagler, First Baptist Church of Tavares, provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Price asked for any changes to the Agenda. Mr. Drury said 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 – Employee Appreciation Day – March 3, 2023

Mayor Price read a Proclamation declaring March 3, 2023, Employee Appreciation Day. Employee Appreciation Day was created by Dr. Bob Nelson, a founding member of Recognition Professionals International, in 1995 to reward and thank employees for their hard work and dedication to an organization. Employee Appreciation Day is held on the first Friday of March each year.

MOTION

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

Council Member Singer said Tavares had the best city employees who go above and beyond daily.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0

Tab 3. Proclamation – Florida Government Finance Professional's Week – March 20-24, 2023

Mayor Price read a Proclamation designating March 20 through March 24, 2023, as Government Finance Professionals Week. Government Finance Professionals Week is an event sponsored by the Florida Government Finance Officers Association (FGFOA) to recognize all government finance professionals who provide vital services to the state and communities.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Bob Grenier.

Ms. Houghton thanked the Council and recognized the following Finance Department staff members in attendance: Purchasing Manager John Rumble, Finance Manager

Brianna Stack, Budget Analyst Brett Jones, Administrative Coordinator Kay Mayes, Staff Accountant Sue Sharp, and Accounting Clerk Judy Reid.

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 said there were no ordinances or resolutions before the Council for consideration.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if anyone wished to pull an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion. Mayor Price asked to pull the February 15, 2023, City Council minutes for discussion.

Mayor Price made the following change: change 'Ribbon on Ruby Street' to 'Rhythm on Ruby Street' where applicable.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the minutes with corrections, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 4. Approval of the February 1 and February 15, 2023, City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda with changes.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 5. Fire Station 29 Air Quality Improvement Project

Chief Keith made the following presentation:

The Fire Department received a FEMA grant to improve air quality which called for the purchase and installation of a MagneGrip Diesel Exhaust Removal System at Fire Station 29. The equipment has been received. To complete the installation of the exhaust system, the Fire Station roof truss system will be retrofitted to support the weight load of the equipment.

The City Council has authorized \$103,000 in ARPA grant funds towards completing the roof truss system retrofit project. The project engineer (GatorSkitch) has designed the project and the Public Works Director has negotiated a contract and costs with Johnson-Laux Construction for two options for the City to select from as follows:

Option 1: Cost = \$271,162.81. This option strengthens the roof truss system and performs the bare minimum required to support the exhaust system equipment.

Option 2: Cost = \$342,230.35. This option includes strengthening the roof truss system plus adding a hard ceiling, lighting improvements, electrical improvements, and installation of air curtain fans at the two doors leading into the interior living spaces. (initial project goal)

It should be noted the City's Public Works Director selected Johnson-Laux Construction by utilizing the City's membership in the Sourcewell Local Government Purchasing Coop. Sourcewell provides support to local governments by pre-qualifying contractors for advanced procurement of various goods and services by utilizing a national competitive process. Attached is a letter from the Public Works Director recommending Johnson-Laux Construction to do the work.

Staff recommends Option 2: Award contract to Johnson-Laux Construction in the amount of \$342,230.35. Authorize staff to utilize ARPA contingency funds to complete this project.

Chief Keith said the City engineer initially believed the trusses would hold the system's weight and cost \$103,000.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Pfister asked how the truss issues and costs were missed when reviewing the project. Chief Keith said the City engineer, Gatorskitch, was not under contract and felt, at the time, \$103,000 would complete the project. Chief Keith said costs had increased, and noted securing contractors for small, complicated jobs was difficult.

Mr. Drury said the cost was an estimation by the engineer without utilizing a structural engineer who would have evaluated the actual needs and current conditions of the steel

structure to determine a true cost. Other factors included the increased price of steel construction costs.

Council Member Pfister inquired about selecting Option 1 to bring the air quality to standard and completing the remaining work later when prices decrease. Mr. Drury said engineering plans and permits could be impacted if the project was postponed. The City might also incur the cost of two mobilizations, and construction costs may stay the same or increase

Council Member Pfister asked for confirmation that the historic train station funds would not be utilized. Mr. Drury confirmed and said the funds would come from ARPA reserves. He advised that ARPA reserve funds were designated for project overages; most were complete at or under budget. Mr. Drury said the historic train station HVAC project would come before the Council separately at a future date.

Council Member Pfister asked if all the proposed improvements at the Fire Station pertained to air quality. Chief Keith confirmed. He said the lighting was an upgrade from incandescent bulbs to LEDs which would decrease some long-term costs. Council Member Pfister asked how the truss system was missed when the Fire Station was built. Chief Keith said the building was built in 2003, and he was unsure of the building codes then.

Vice Mayor Gamble said he appreciated Council Member Pfister's comments and supported Option 2 as ARPA reserve funds were available. He stated he felt the market prices might remain the same. He did not want to duplicate services and would be amenable to using historic train station HVAC funding if necessary.

Council Member Grenier said he appreciated Council Member Pfister's questions and concerns. He noted his support for Option 2 and asked how soon the project could begin. Mr. Dillon said the project could start immediately if Council elected Option 2.

Council Member Singer said the project began with Chief Keith seeking a grant to improve the building for the firefighters. He said the improvements were needed, the funds were available utilizing ARPA reserves, most projects were complete, and he favored moving forward with Option 2.

Council Member Singer asked why the project was not put out to bid. Mr. Drury said it would take three to four months to complete the bidding process. He stated the project required a procurement process with a pre-qualified contractor or going out to bid. Mr. Drury said using a pre-qualified contractor expedited the project while following federal procurement rules. Mr. Dillon noted the grant would expire in June 2023. Council Member Singer said Chief Keith believed the project was necessary to improve air quality at the fire station and noted funds were available. He commended Mr. Dillon for obtaining the best option and supported Option 2.

Mayor Price asked if all air quality issues would be addressed with Option 2. Chief Keith confirmed, barring unforeseen circumstances. He said there was a new air conditioning system at the station, and the project before the Council was the last part of the air quality envelope.

Mayor Price asked if Option 1 and Option 2 amounts were in addition to the \$103,000 or included in those amounts. Chief Keith said it is in addition to the \$103,000.

Mayor Price asked if there was another funding source available. Mr. Drury confirmed and said General Fund Reserves. He said ARPA reserves would be the first line of defense, and Option B would use General Fund Reserves.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Option 2, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 6. Utilities Department Update

Mr. Clark provided a Utility Department update with some of the following highlights:

- Water, sewer, and stormwater were permitted through FDEP, and the City received positive audits in 2022. The wastewater plant was scheduled to obtain a 10-year permit in June 2023, one of the 27% of cities to achieve a ten-year permit out of 4100 agencies.
- Tim Claiter was promoted to the position of Wastewater Plan Manager due to retirement. Mr. Claiter had 11 years of experience with the City, and a succession plan was in place for all management positions.
- Angel Acosta, Wastewater Trainee, would receive his city wastewater license the following week. He met all state requirements and was available on weekends and evenings.
- ARPA projects:
 - \$56,000 improvements to the entrance of Lake Francis Estates had been completed. He thanked the Council for their support.
 - Modification to the parking lot at West Wooton Park was completed.
- Lake Francis Estates was completed with a few administrative items pending. The state inspected the project, which came within or slightly under budget. The Finance Department handled the payments and administration portion of the \$7 million dollar project, and lowering the water crossing St. Clair Abrams would be a future project.
- Lakeview Drive was a top priority for stormwater improvements. Phase 1 was completed in 2022. Phase 2 was identified and designed, and a Notice to Proceed was issued.
- Woodlea Road extension was approved, and a Notice to Proceed was issued. The project would begin by May 1. He said the contractor is contacting Lake

County regarding road lane closures which could include two lanes for 3.5 months or one lane for six months.

- Base Read/Neptune 360 project started 6 or 7 years ago and was 65-70% complete. The project would include three more phases and allows staff to read water meters from their desks.
- To support the Avalon/Hermosa project, Lake Hermosa Booster Pump Station included a temporary booster station to supply pressure. The City and Avalon/Hermosa entered an agreement to provide water capacity for Phases 1 and 2. The Council approved the design of the Booster Pump Station; Avalon/Hermosa gave the City the land. The next phase of the project would be provided to the Council at a future date.
- A \$753,910.00 grant was submitted to the Lake County Water Authority (LCWA) and State Representative Truenow at 100% funding for a pond on St. Clair Abrams. He said the project might include a sidewalk. The LCWA awarded half of the requested funding during their January 2023 meeting, and Mr. Clark hopes to bring back the remaining funding through additional grants.

Mayor Price, Vice Mayor Gamble, and Council Member Singer thanked Mr. Clark for the Utilities Department update.

Tab 7. Police K9 Program Update

Chief Coursey made the following presentation:

A K9 enclosure for a patrol vehicle has been ordered and will be received and installed in six (6) weeks. Once the enclosure has been installed, the two assigned Police Officers will be dispatched to Southern Coast Kennels, located in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, to select their new K9 partner. A Police Lt. and the Police Chief will accompany the two (2) Officers during this process.

The process of selecting the K9 is somewhat unique. The officers will be placed in a kennel with approximately 10 dogs. The trainers will observe and monitor the dog's interactions with these new K9 officers and will select the dog that best fits each respective officer. Once selected, the officer will bring home their new partner to begin the bonding, which will take approximately 1-2 weeks. After the one-on-one bonding process, the officers will then bring their dogs back to Southern Coast Kennel to begin a 4-week handler training course, which will provide instruction on how to utilize the dogs for patrol purposes. The dogs from Southern Coast Kennels will be approximately 15-20 months old at the time of selection and are from Europe.

The Department anticipates activating the K9 program to assist citizens late Spring, or early summer.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

XII. OLD BUSINESS

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Jed Wolcott, 1150 Lake Dora Drive, Tavares, said he would like assistance to move a dock permit forward that had been under a lengthy review. Mr. Drury said staff would look into the status of the permit.

Gary Santoro, Royal Harbor, thanked Council Member Singer for his comments regarding his appreciation for the City employees. He commended Mr. Drury and the staff for their hard work.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 8. City Administrator Report

City Administrator

Mr. Drury said Mr. Dillon had done a great job on a micro surface program for the City to extend the Council's available budget for repaving streets. He said funds remained to repave the west end of Main Street, and the surfacing would be completed in approximately thirty days. Mr. Drury noted the electrical and lighting were complete, and the totality of the incremental improvements was significant.

Department Directors

Chief Coursey commended Ms. Houghton and the Finance Department Team.

Mr. Dillon said the City was able to utilize ARPA funds and catch up on 11 years' worth of road deficits. He thanked the Council.

Mr. Tweedie thanked Mayor Price for joining him and Mr. Drury and Lake County Commissioner Smith in hosting a group from the City of St. Cloud, the newest City in Florida to join the Florida Aviation System to obtain a publicly licensed seaplane base. He said staff had worked with St. Cloud over the past several years, and they visited Tavares to fact-find for their next implementation phase. Mayor Price said they were overwhelmed by how great the Tavares Seaplane Base was.

Mr. Tweedie said Planes Tunes & Barbeque would kick off the event season on March 10 through 11, 2023. He invited those present to the event and said there would be music, entertainment, and the City's first drone show. Mr. Tweedie commended Ms. Houghton and the Finance Team.

Chief Keith said a pinning ceremony for newly promoted and hired employees would be held on March 8, 2023, at 4:00 p.m., at the Public Safety Building. He said the Council

received an email invitation. He noted recent retirements created opportunities for promotions.

Ms. Bublitz said a hotdog tailgate lunch would be held on March 3, 2023, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Civic Center for Employee Appreciation Day.

Mr. Aldrich said Babe Ruth opening day ceremonies would be held on March 4, 2023, beginning at 10:00 a.m. He said on March 11, 2023, at 9:30 a.m., the Tavares Friends of the Library would hold a pet parade around the library and Civic Center Ridge Park area.

Ms. Houghton thanked the Department Directors and their staff for assisting the Finance Department. She noted auditors would be on site the following week and said the Finance and Utilities departments worked together on many projects, including the Base Read/Neptune 360 project. Ms. Houghton said the Utilities Department worked with the hardware, and the Finance Department worked with integrating the finance system. Together utility readings are completed more expeditiously and efficiently moving forward in the future. She said one of the goals of the Council was to work better and not necessarily harder. She thanked the Council for supporting the staff's endeavors to bring technology to fruition.

Tab 9. City Council Member Reports

Vice Mayor Gamble

- He said he had a scheduling conflict and could not attend the Employee Appreciation Tailgate Lunch.
- He said the Tavares employees were special. He said the departments work together to make the city the best, and he tries to attend all events.

Council Member Singer

- He said he attended the quarterly B.E.T.T.E.R. meeting hosted by Pastor Watkins. He thanked Pastor Watkins for his efforts and Mayor Price and Vice Mayor Gamble for attending.
- He said he looked forward to the drone show at the Planes, Tunes & Barbeque event, a first of its kind in Lake County.
- He said he looked forward to the Babe Ruth opening day, ceremony, and Employee Appreciation Tailgate Lunch.
- He said he had a scheduling conflict and would not be available for the Fire Department Pinning Ceremony. He asked Chief Keith to congratulate the new firefighters and those who received promotions.
- He said the Finance Team did a fantastic job and thanked Ms. Houghton and the Finance staff.

Council Member Pfister

- She said the City of Tavares employees were the best and worked well together.
- She said the volleyball courts at Pontoon Promenade were lighted and busy, and it was nice to see the project complete and enjoyed by the citizens.
- She commended Chief Coursey and said she had heard wonderful comments about her leadership from the community.

Council Member Grenier

- He noted March was Women's History Month. He recognized many past and present women in the City of Tavares.
- He said March 10 was the birth date of Major St. Clair Abrams, who founded Tavares and Lake County.

Mayor Price

- He said he looked forward to the Babe Ruth Opening Ceremony and noted his son played with the league for many years.
- He said he looked forward to the Planes, Tunes & Barbeque event.
- He thanked the staff and said they were the most professional and efficient group.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk