CITY COUNCIL:
Amanda Green/Seat 1
Elizabeth Brannon/Seat 2
Eddie Farris/Seat 3
Mark Martin/Seat 4
Elizabeth Haffner/At Large

MAYOR:
Russ Barley
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City of Freeport
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA
City Hall Council Chambers
September 24, 2020 6:30pm

1. **Meeting Called to Order**
   - The City Council Meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers by Mayor Barley.

   Council members present: Amanda Green, Elizabeth Brannon, Mayor Russ Barley, Eddie Farris, Mark Martin, and Elizabeth Haffner.

   Staff present: Finance Officer Sara Bowers, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, City Clerk Malani Robinson, City Manager Charlie Simmons, City Director Latilda Hughes-Neel, Billing Manager Debbie Roberts, Parks Director Travis Digges, Sewer Manager Robert Fawcett, and Alex Rouchaleau.

2. **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**
   -The invocation was given by Councilwoman Haffner followed by the pledge of allegiance.

3. **Recognition of Guests**
4. **Consent Agenda**
   a. **Bills (Tab 1)**
   b. **Revenue & Expenditure Reports as of August 2020 (Tab 2)**
   c. **Minutes September 8, 2020 First Public Hearing (Tab 3)**
   d. **Minutes September 8, 2020 City Council Meeting (Tab 4)**
5. **Public Comment on Consent Agenda**

6. **Approval of Consent Agenda**

   COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Farris. Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner. All ayes: motion carried.

7. **Consideration of Additions/Deletions to the Agenda**
   - Finance: Delete Excess Funds and add Budget Amendment #8.
   - Engineering: Adding Washington Street Stormwater Improvement Bid Results
   - Legal: Adopting Commercial Rate Resolution
   - City Clerk: Delete TextMyGov

8. **Approval of Agenda with Additions/Deletions**

   COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilwoman Green. Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner. All ayes: motion carried.

9. **Staff Reports**
   a. **Water**
      -None.
   b. **Sewer**
      -None.
   c. **Parks/Projects**
      -None.
   d. **City Manager**
      i. **Liberty Partners Contract Renewal 2020-2021 (Tab 5)**
      -City Manager Simmons presented the Liberty Partners Contract which reflected the same terms and conditions as the previous contract but with date changes to reflect the 2020-2021 year. City Manager Simmons requested that the Council make a motion for the Mayor to sign the new contract.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Farris. Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon. All ayes: motion carried.

-City Manager Simmons also wanted to recognize the Water, Sewer, and Parks Department for their hard work following Hurricane Sally, alongside the supporting City Staff. Council members also expressed their thanks for City Manager Simmons's work alongside the staff with the sandbags and cleanup.

e. City Clerk

f. Finance

i. Budget Amendment #8

-Finance Officer Bowers asked the Council for a motion to approve Budget Amendment #8 which allocates funds towards the new pole barn on the recently acquired City property.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilwoman Haffner. Seconded by: Councilwoman Green All ayes: motion carried.

g. Billing

i. Update to New Customer Policy (Tab 8)

-Billing Manager Roberts presented an updated New Customer Policy and Affidavit following the guidelines given in the previous meeting. Billing Manager Roberts asked for a motion to approve the updated policy.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilwoman Brannon. Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner. All ayes: motion carried.

h. Planning

i. Bluffs at Lafayette Mixed Use Planned Development Project – Proposed Resolution (Tab 9)

-City Director Hughes-Neel introduced the Bluffs at Lafayette Project as a 15-20 year build out plan that would include single family units, multi-family units, and commercial builds. The project builders were requesting an increase in the maximum standard building height to 60 feet and sought approval from the Council. Councilwoman Green asked for clarification on the height requirements that were given to them by a representative from Eglin Air Force Base. City Director Hughes Neel confirmed that the height request from the Eglin representative was to keep everything under a two-story build (35 feet build) and opened the floor to Project Agent Matthew Parker to answer any technical questions the Council may have.

-Mr.Parker introduced the proposed plan to the Council as a compatible fit with the future for the City of Freeport, and the consistency it would have with the expansion of the sewer plant down Highway 331. Mr.Parker informed the Council that his firm had been working very closely with the City's Engineer and the Owl's Head Consultants for consistent connectivity between the projects. Mr.Parker informed the Council that the project would mainly consist of single-family units, noting that the height demands were just a possibility and would be contingent upon the growth of the City. Mr.Parker explained to the Council that three stories would be the max for potential builds at this time due to the economic downside of such an investment. City Director Hughes-Neel informed the Council that the project is on the 331 North Corridor which would subject it to all the standards of that landscape. Councilwoman

Green expressed her concerns with the side setbacks for the proposed plans, noting the flooding issues Hammock Bay had experienced with the standard being at 5 feet. Mr.Parker explained the differences in the terrain and why a 5 feet setback would be sufficient for the area. Councilwoman Green noted that the plan would be a 15-20 year execute which would leave room for landscape changes due to different developers and climate concerns. City Director Hughes-Neel informed the Council that certain requirements have been put in place to ensure that new builds are building at a certain level to alleviate flooding issues, noting that many of the prior builds did not have the guidelines that are in place today. Mr.Parker suggested that the Council accept the Resolution with changes that prohibit side setbacks being used for stormwater drainage. Councilman Martin clarified the use of setbacks and the lack of effect the size would play in drainage issues. City Attorney Adkinson suggested to the Council to approve the Resolution contingent to the setbacks being 5 feet provided adequate stormwater engineering is submitted to show that it would not have an adverse impact on those lots with 5 foot setbacks; that no swells or stormwater retention or runoff would be directed through those 5 foot setbacks. City Attorney Adkinson noted that by adding this contingency that during the D.O they would be able to revisit if they have any concerns and asked for Mr.Parkers approval of this to which he agreed. City Attorney Adkinson explained that a motion would need to be made to approve the Resolution upon the noted contingency.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Martin. Seconded By: Councilwoman Brannon. All ayes: motion carried.

This will be reflected in Resolution 2020-12.

ii. **JAB Holdings Re-Zoning – 1st Reading of Ordinance-Advertise for 2nd Reading (Tab 10)**
-Current codes for residential commercial allow apartments only as a variance if they have commercial on the first floor, the owners do not want to develop commercial on the first floor they want to develop apartments. The rezoning request is so that the owners can construct multifamily housing on the property. The second reading of this advertisement will be in October.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Farris Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner. All ayes: motion carried.

iii. **Verandas Phase 1-C-3 Final Plat (Tab 11)**
-City Director Hughes-Neel requested a motion to approve the final plat.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Martin. Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon. All ayes: motion carried.

i. **Legal**

i. **Resolution 2020-09 (Tab 12)**
-This resolution was previously approved by Mayor Barley under his executive authority declaring a State of

Emergency under Hurricane Sally. City Attorney Adkinson requested a motion for ratification of this Resolution.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilwoman Brannon Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner. All ayes: motion carried.

-City Attorney Adkinson presented an additional resolution reflecting the commercial rates that were adopted in the previous meeting. City Attorney Adkinson requested a motion to approve the Resolution 2020-13.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Martin. Seconded by: Councilman Farris. All ayes: motion carried.

j. Engineering

i. Barrier Free Park Phase I draft plans (Tab 13)

-City Engineer Rouchaleau presented the draft plans for the Barrier Free Park Phase 1 to the Council for approval so that they could move forward with submitting the plans for permitting.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Farris. Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon. All ayes: motion carried.

Councilwoman Green inquired about sufficient space along the 20 Highway widening within the plans which would support traffic flow as the City grows. Engineer Rouchaleau confirmed that the space would permit a limited number of vehicles for the four-lane backup. Councilwoman Green requested revisions to the plans that would assist in better traffic flow. City Engineer

Rouchaleau agreed to bring a revised layout of the plans for the next meeting. City Attorney Adkinson informed the Council that they must withdraw their prior motion. City Engineer Rouchaleau also noted that the stormwater runoff plans were consistent with the City Hall Master Plan.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Farris. Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon All ayes: motion carried.

-City Engineer Rouchaleau informed the Council that the City had two bidders for the Washington Street Resurface Project, however the winner was RBM whose proposed bid was underbudget. The RBM bid was a grand total of $83,985. City Engineer Rouchaleau requested a motion to award the bid to RBM and to issue a notice of receipt.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilwoman Haffner. Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon. All ayes: motion carried.

10. Old Business

i. April Court Abandonment (Tab 14)

-Following the previous City Council Meeting, the Council members visited the April Court Abandonment site for their personal inspection. City Attorney Adkinson informed the Council that the public hearing on this matter had been closed, and it was at their discretion to allow the public to speak. City Attorney Adkinson reminded the Council of the criteria for abandonment and called for them to make a final decision. The Council made a motion to approve the abandonment.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Martin. Seconded by: Councilman Farris.

Public Comment: Mrs.Bennett gave further testimony on the issues of the abandonment, and the restrictive access she had to her home due to a disgruntle tenant. City Attorney Adkinson gave clarity to the abandonment location and referenced a letter from the Walton County Fire and Rescue stating they had no objections to the abandonment. City Attorney Adkinson also informed the Council that there was a utility easement in the abandonment therefor he recommended that the Council amend the resolution to reflect the city abandoning the parcel but having the ability to work with the owner on future utility installments.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned By: Councilman Martin. Seconded by: Councilman Farris. *4 ayes: 1 nay Councilwoman Haffner.*

Resolution 2020-14 will be presented by Attorney Adkinson at the next Council Meeting, with the suggested amendments to the abandonment.

11. New Business

a. Mayor Russ Barley

i. North Walton Tourist Development Tax

-Mayor Barley invited Megan Harrison, the CEO of the Walton County Chamber of Commerce to speak on the North Walton Tourist Development Tax. Mrs. Harrison greeted the Council and began to inform them on the

North Walton Tourist Development Tax and the benefits it will have on the City. Mrs.Harrison clarified that this tax would not be imposed on local citizens but on the tourist and would generate funds to improve the local infrastructure. The North Walton Tourist Development Tax will be on the November ballot for voting, therefore Mrs.Harrison wanted the Council to consider drafting a Resolution in support of the bill so they could assist in educating residents. Councilwoman Brannon asked for clarity on Mrs.Harrison idea of support which prompted Attorney Adkinson to notify the Council of the legal guidelines which prohibits them from doing so unless they abided by specific language. The Council began to discuss the effects the tax would have on growth within the City, and the continuous cycle of tourism. Some Council Members cautioned that tourism could overcrowd the City and prevent residents from enjoying local attractions without congestion. Other Councilmembers felt that it would be a good idea to showcase more of the entire county and could bring in more money for businesses. Mrs.Harrison informed the Council that 40% of the tax dollars collected must be spent on marketing, and that some small businesses would get free promotion. City Attorney Adkinson noted to the Council that the taxing district would be expanding and would open the door for a representative to be selected throughout the County. Councilmen Farris made a motion in support of a resolution that supported the expansion of the taxing district, with special modifications being made to the language of the Resolution Mrs.Harrison petitioned for. The Mayor noted that the TDC has been very generous of its support of Bay Fest marketing every year, and other Freeport events.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Farris. Seconded by: Councilwoman Green. *2 ayes: Councilman Farris and Councilwoman Green; 3 nays: Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Martin, and Councilwoman Haffner.*

Councilman Martin noted the benefits the tax could have for the City; however, he assessed the effects it could have on traffic before proper development is established. Mrs.Harrison informed the Council that with the expansion of the taxing district a member from the City of Freeport would be able to make input on how the revenue from the tax collected would be spent. Councilwoman Green noted that the City of Freeport already experiences ripple tourism, and that the City could benefit from the tourism due to the variety of activities offered. Councilwoman Brannon informed the Council that it would ultimately be left up to the voters to make the decision. Councilman Farris made a motion to adopt the resolution that satisfies the legal standards supporting the expansion of the tourist development district.

ii. Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting

-The Mayor asked for the Council to relay any suggestions on the safety guidelines that would be implemented in the City's festivities for the Holiday's. Councilwoman Haffner expressed her approval of the additional safety precautions that would be taken for COVID-19 safety.

COUNCIL ACTION: Motioned by: Councilman Farris Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon. *4 ayes: Councilman Farris, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Martin, and Councilwoman Haffner; 1 Nay: Councilwoman Green.*

b. Councilwoman Brannon

c. **Councilman Farris**
d. **Councilwoman Green**
e. **Councilwoman Haffner**
f. **Councilman Martin**

12. Public Comment

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 PM.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk