City of Freeport

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 25, 2021, 6:30 PM
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Councilman Eddie Farris, Councilman Mark Martin, Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner

Council Members Absent: Councilwoman Amanda Green

Staff Members Present: City Manager Charlie Simmons, City Clerk Malani Robinson, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Planning Director Latilda Neel, Finance Officer Sara Bowers, Billing Manager Debbie Roberts, Parks Director Travis Digges, Water Supervisor Larry Tuggle, Sewer Supervisor Robert Fawcett, City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau

1. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Mayor Barley in the Council Chambers of Freeport City Hall.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was given by Councilman Farris, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

3. Tedd Barr- Fee Waiver Request

Mr.Barr informed the Council that due to the pandemic the Little League experienced significant financial loses after being denied their refunded charter fees for the year, making a $4,000 investment in concession food, purchasing new gear, as well as updating the storage doors for their equipment. Now that the Little League has grown to the largest that it has ever been Mr.Barr requested a fee waiver to assist the league in expenditure cost. Councilwoman Haffner thanked Mr.Barr for all his hard work with the Little League and made a motion to approve the waiver. Mr.Barr invited the Council out for Opening Day on March 27 for recognition.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

To APPROVE the fee waiver request.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

4. Recognition of Guests

Mayor Barley recognized County Commissioner "Boots" McCormick.

5. Consent Agenda

a. Revenue & Expenditure Report

b. Bills

c. City Council Meeting Minutes- February 9, 2021

6. Public Comment on Consent Agenda

None.

7. Approval of Consent Agenda

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To APPROVE the consent Agenda as presented.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

8. Consideration of Additions/Deletions to Agenda

- City Manager Simmons- Disconnect Policy

9. Approval of Agenda with Additions/Deletions

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To APPROVE the Agenda with the specified addition as presented.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

10. Staff Reports

a. Water

b. Sewer

1. Quote Approval

Sewer Supervisor Fawcett presented the Council a quote for a new spare pump that would have the ability to work in 3 different locations around the City. Sewer Supervisor Fawcett requested a motion to approve the purchase of the spare pump.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Martin

To APPROVE the purchase of the spare pump.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

c. Parks

d. City Manager

1. Appropriation Changes

City Manager Simmons informed the Council that after speaking with Representative Drake he was advised to raise the appropriations ask amount to $1,000,000, however he wanted the Council's approval. City Attorney Adkinson informed the Council that they would need to make a motion to ratify that change and authorizing staff to make reports to support the request.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

To RATIFY the appropriations, request amount to $1,000,000.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

2. Alternative Water Supply Grant Ratification

City Manager Simmons reminded the Council that he began an aggressive pursuit of grants to compliment the Highway 331 Project with the Bay Initiative. Alongside County Commissioner McCormick and Engineer Knauer, City Manager Simmons has been seeking alternative ways to get residents from septic to sewer. City Manager Simmons sought the Council's approval to pursue the grant by submitting the application. County Commissioner McCormick approached the Council by expressing his personal commitment to see the Bay Initiative succeed, noting his support of the project in prior years.

Moved by: Councilman Martin
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To APPROVE submitting the application for the grant.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

3. Disconnect Policy

City Manager Simmons informed the Council of the contradictory nature within the current disconnect policy, noting the need to enforce boundaries to protect City Staff. Despite City Manager Simmons's commitment to customer service, he noted that the afterhours workday for some staff members to fulfill request needed to come to halt. Councilwoman Haffner asked for clarity on the disconnect policy regarding the same day request reconnect after 5PM. Water Supervisor Tuggle informed the Council that to fulfill same day request his workers will go out to reconnect after hours. Mayor Barley wanted to confirm that the future use of the on-call person would be for emergency situations only, Water Supervisor Tuggle confirmed. Councilwoman Brannon queried on the number of reconnects after hours, Water Supervisor Tuggle noted that the usual amount was significant however the numbers have been reduced. City Manager Simmons noted that Billing Manager Roberts currently took her work laptop home to fulfill request that came after hours and suggested that all request submitted after 4PM be reconnected the following business day. Councilwoman Haffner suggested that the change in policy be reflected on the bottom of the bill, Councilman Martin suggested following the disconnect list and notifying them of the

change via robo call. Billing Manager Roberts noted that she could add the notice to the robo calls.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Martin

To APPROVE next business day reconnects with no more fee.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

4. Updates

- City Manager Simmons informed the Council that he tasked City Clerk Robinson with the responsibility of looking into recorded lines for the City, noting the need to improve the customer service experience. City Manager Simmons congratulated City Clerk Robinson's on her ability to not only find a company that reduces the City's phone expense by 50% but also grant recorded lines with an updated phone system. City Manager Simmons expressed his concern for time the recorded calls would need to be kept abiding by Florida Sunshine Laws. City Attorney Adkinson advised that the calls would need to be saved for seven years. Councilwoman Brannon expressed her concerns for having all the lines recorded, suggesting that it be conducted by certain departments only. Council members discussed the departments they would like recorded for customer service purposes, agreeing to exempting the administrative departments from call recordings.

- City Manager Simmons sought guidance on a date to have Marcum honor their contract by presenting their audit findings before the Council. Council members suggested the March 25 Council Meeting to which City Manager Simmons agreed to make arrangements.

- City Manager Simmons informed the Council that there were currently four interviews scheduled for the dual certified Class A Sewer Operator position.

- City Manager Simmons introduced Officer Pendleton as the new Head of Security for Blight Control, noting his plan to handle the blight issue in the City with a personal approach before resulting to legal intervention. City Manager Simmons informed the Council that he would be using his personal equipment to assist residents with resolving their blight issues, noting his desire to make it a town initiative. Officer Pendleton expressed her plan to implore community outreach organizations and local organizations to get involved with resolving City blight. Officer Pendleton discussed arranging a media blast to make it an event for City clean up. Councilman Martin reminded the Council that a former commissioner conducted a city-wide dumpster day that had positive results, since then no one continued the effort. Councilman Martin also noted that the City purchased five dumpsters that could be useful in the event. Council members expressed their favor of the initiative.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To IMPLEMENT call recording lines for customer service with the EXCEPTION of the administrative departments.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

e. City Clerk

f. Finance

g. Billing

h. Planning

1. Marina Village Phase IV Revised Plat

Planning Director Hughes-Neel presented the revised plat with the suggested language for approval and signature.

Moved by: Councilman Martin
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To APPROVE the Marina Village Phase IV Revised Plat.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

2. Updates

- Planning Director Hughes-Neel informed the Council that now that the Planning Department is fully staffed, they have had the ability to focus on other projects to assist the growth of the City. Planning Director Hughes-Neel noted that she has been reviewing the draft Walton County Mobility Plan that could reap monetary benefits for the City by collecting mobility fees that could be used for CIP plans for the City. Planning Director Hughes-Neel mentioned the pros and cons of pursuing a Mobility Plan, noting that the revenue collected could not be used on repair or maintenance projects. After speaking with consultants Planning Director Hughes-Neel would be investigating alternative options that would be presented at a later meeting.

- Planning Director Hughes-Neel noted that last year she was given permission to work on a grant with the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition which resulted in them finding a Green Stormwater Infrastructure Grant. This grant uses an eco-friendly and natural approach that could be tested as a pilot in a small section of Marse Landing and Four Mile Creek. The Green Stormwater Infrastructure grant would cover all expenses as the City monitors it with a three-year education proponent, the initiative is to encourage green stormwater improvements across the City. Planning Director Hughes-Neel noted that she along with Engineer Knauer, Engineer Rouchaleau, and City Manager Simmons are currently working on site plans and a proposal for this grant to present to the Council for approval.

- Planning Director briefed the Council on the new City Planner's adaptability to the position, noting his creation of a comprehensive table of uses that will assist the land development coding. The table will be a helpful research tool which Planning Director Hughes-Neel will present a draft for Council's approval and or suggestions at a later date.

- Planning Director Hughes-Neel noted that the Masonic Lodge was now registered as a historic landmark which qualifies it for a new series of grants to assist with restoration. Planning Director Hughes-Neel offered her support of assisting the progress of restoring the Masonic Lodge, referencing her discussions with County Commissioner McCormick and City Manager Simmons regarding options for assistance. Mayor Barley noted that the Masonic Lodge recently applied for a grant that was denied, however Liberty Partners were assisting.

i. Legal

j. Engineering

1. Freeport WWTF Expansion- Bid Results

Engineer Rouchaleau informed the Council that despite Sawcross Contractors & Engineers having the lowest bid of $27,392,000 it was extremely over budget along with the other bids. Engineer Rouchaleau proposed that the City reject all bids and conduct a Special Meeting on March 2 to discuss a plan of action. City Attorney Adkinson gave counsel to the Council on the appropriate motions, noting that the purpose of the Special Meeting would be to approve the re-advertisement of the project.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon
Seconded by: Councilman Martin

To REJECT all bids based on price exceeding allotted funds.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Martin

To CONDUCT a Special Meeting on Tuesday, March 2 at 4PM.

Absent (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman Martin, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried

2. Municipal SCOP Application

Engineer Rouchaleau presented the Council the drafted Municipal SCOP Application for South Jackson Street, opening the floor for changes and requesting a motion to proceed.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

To APPROVE the application for submittal.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

11. Old Business

12. New Business

a. Mayor Russ Barley

b. Councilwoman Brannon

c. Councilman Farris

d. Councilwoman Green

e. Councilwoman Haffner

f. Councilman Martin

13. Public Comment

Engineer Knauer gave clarity to the Council on the techniques that would be used in the Green Stormwater Infrastructure Grant, noting how plants are used to absorb harmful chemicals in the water which would benefit the environment.

14. Adjournment

Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:18 PM.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk