City of Freeport

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

August 26, 2021, 6:30 PM
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

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

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

1. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm 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. Recognition of Guests

Mayor Barley recognized Bill Imfeld, Director of the Economic Development Alliance (EDA). Mr. Imfeld gave the Council an update on the EDA activities in Freeport. He informed them that the last EDA lot in the Industrial Park had been sold to Waste Management. The plan to purchase the 100 acres adjacent to the Industrial Park is no longer in effect because the owner decided not to sell the property to the EDA.

The EDA is currently working with a developer in Texas to bring a large clean-industry state-of-the-art manufacturing business to Freeport. This project would bring 200 jobs to Freeport and be located on a couple of hundred acres east on Highway 20; the developer is currently in touch with a realtor.

Mr. Imfeld reminded the Council that Mayor Barley is on the Board of the EDA. He invited them to bring any suggestions for Industry they would like to see in the area to either Mayor Barley or himself.

Mayor Barley opened the floor for questions from the Council and then from the public; there were none. The Council thanked Mr. Imfeld for the update.

4. Daughter's of the American Revolution Proclamation

The Mayor recognized Connie Lee, Chris Keating, and Larae Sorrell as representatives of the Daughters of the American Revolution. He then read a Proclamation declaring Constitution Week to be September 17 - 23, 2021. The DAR members thanked the Mayor for his continued support of their organization.

5. Consent Agenda

a. Bills

b. Budget Workshop Minutes- July 29, 2021

c. City Council Meeting Minutes- August 10, 2021

d. Budget Workshop Minutes- August 17, 2021

e. Revenue & Expenditure Report

6. Public Comment on Consent Agenda

None

7. Approval of Consent Agenda

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

To approve the consent Agenda as presented.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

8. Consideration of Additions/Deletions to Agenda

- City Manager Simmons: Hire a temp for City Clerk Duties; Authorize Interim Clerk for signatory duties
- Engineer Rouchaleau: Update to Barrier-Free park
- Mayor Barley: Christmas decorations; Freeport is City of the Year; Bayfest

9. Approval of Agenda with Additions/Deletions

To approve the agenda with the specified additions as presented.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Martin

To approve the Agenda with the specified additions as presented.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

10. Staff Reports

a. Water

b. Sewer

c. Parks

d. City Manager

City Manager Charlie Simmons updated the members on a few items. He informed the Council members that he has been nominated to the Walton County Redistricting Board by Boots McCormick; the Board will be meeting on September 1st.

He met with Reynolds Henderson regarding Triumph and obtained some good information for putting in applications and what needs to be done to move forward; Freeport will be taking the lead on our own projects.

The I.T. changes are happening. The transfer is going smoothly with the two companies working together, mostly on weekends. Toward the end of next week it should be complete.

The Carr property annexation should be back on the agenda for the next Council meeting. Manager Simmons said he has been out trying to talk to the owners of the additional parcels that we would like to bring in to do the entire annexation north to south; there are 4 parcels on the south side of CR 3280 that would need to be included to bring in the remainder of the Carr property on the north side of 3280.

1. Ratify State of Emergency Declaration

City Manager Simmons explained that the previous State of Emergency, for Tropical Storm Fred which has already passed, just needs to be formally ratified.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Martin

To ratify the previous State of Emergency Declaration for Tropical Storm Fred.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

2. Hiring of Dual Certified Wastewater Operator

City Manager Simmons informed the Council that the new Dual Certified Wastewater Operator was Paul Johnson. Mr. Johnson introduced himself to the Council.

Attorney Adkinson reminded the council that they had already budgeted for this position.

Mayor Barley asked the Council if they had any questions; Councilwoman Haffner asked what the hierarchy would be between Mr. Johnson and Robert Fawcett, the current Wastewater Supervisor. City Manager Simmons replied that in the beginning they would work together, and then Mr. Johnson will be focusing on Plant Operations while Mr. Fawcett will be focusing on the Outside Services.

There were no further questions. The Council members welcomed Mr. Johnson.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

To ratify the hiring of Paul Johnson as the Dual-Certified Wastewater Operator that was previously budgeted.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

3. Capacity Fee & Rate Study Discussion

City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau addressed the Council. He asked if they would like him to give a summary of the Capacity Fee and Rate Study at this time or if they would prefer to schedule a special meeting. The Council decided to table the presentation until a special meeting could be held.

Councilman Mark Martin pointed out that the summary report on page 32 of the packet showed that the Water Department was operating at a loss. He thanked City Accountant Sara Bowers for providing the new summary report.

Kelly Layman, a member of the public, addressed the Council. She asked several questions to determine if any changes to Capacity Fees and Rates brought about by the Rate Study would be retroactive; the Council members and City Attorney

informed her that any change in Capacity Fees would be effective on the date adopted, not retroactively.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

To schedule a Special Council Meeting at 8:00am on September 14, 2021 before the regular Council meeting to discuss the results of the Capacity Fee and Rate Study.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

4. Hiring Temporary for Clerk duties

City Manager Simmons addressed the Council. He explained that he would like to find a temp to come in and do the clerical duties of the City Clerk until a new City Clerk is hired. Samantha Graves, Planning Technician, will fill in temporarily for meetings and to do minutes, but the Planning Department is too busy at this time for her to perform all of the duties of the City Clerk.

Councilwoman Haffner asked if he had a pay range in mind for the temp; Manager Simmons replied that he did not have a pay range yet. Once he has the Council's approval to hire one he will begin the process.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

To hire a temporary employee to perform clerical duties while searching for a full-time permanent City Clerk.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

5. Addition of an Interim Clerk as a signatory

City Manager Simmons told the Council members that he would like to officially add Samantha Graves as the Interim City Clerk for signatory purposes until a new City Clerk can be hired.

The Mayor asked if the council had any questions or comments, they did not. Mayor Barley asked for public comments, there were none.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To add Samantha Graves as Interim City Clerk for signatory purposes.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

e. City Clerk

f. Finance

1. Employee Health Insurance

City Accountant Bowers directed the Council members to the options for Employee Health Insurance provided in the meeting packet. All agreed that renewing the current plan seemed to be the best option. The Council members thanked Accountant Bowers for researching and providing the information.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Hope

To renew the current Employee Health Insurance plan for another year.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

g. Billing

h. Planning

1. LSA Property Rights Element

Planning Director Latilda Hughes-Neel addressed the Council members. She introduced the Property Rights Element and explained that it is an addition to the Comprehensive Plan that is a legislative mandate.

Attorney Clay Adkinson informed the members that this version includes language that other jurisdictions have chosen which is in addition to the minimum required language. The additional language is protective toward the City. He added that he would not be surprised if the DEO kicks it back, but if they do they will give the City some suggested language to substitute.

Director Hughes-Neel said that she is seeking approval to hold the 1st reading, submit it to the DEO, and then advertise for the 2nd Reading and adoption. Until such time as the Council adopts a Property Rights Element, no other amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be adopted. The Council members asked if it would hold up the LSA for the Carr annexation if the DEO kicks it back; Director Hughes-Neel stated that as long as it has been forwarded to the DEO and is in process other amendments may move forward as usual.

The Council members stated they would prefer to put all three steps in one motion. After the motion was carried, Director Hughes-Neel performed the 1st Reading of the LSA Property Rights Element.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Hope

To hold the 1st Reading of the LSA Property Rights Element, to submit the LSA to the DEO, and for staff to advertise for the 2nd Reading/Adoption.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

i. Legal

j. Engineering

City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau addressed the Council members regarding the Barrier-free Park Phase 1 improvements. He distributed a revised project budget totaling $313,146.50, a reduction of approximately $35,000.00. He summarized the changes.

Engineer Rouchaleau requested Council approval to award the contract for the project to RBM Contracting.

Once the Council members approved the award of the contract, Engineer Rouchaleau requested approval to issue the Notice to Proceed.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Approval for City Engineer Rouchaleau to award the contract for the Barrier Free Park Phase 1 Improvements to RBM Contracting in the amount of $313,146.50.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Hope

Approval for City Engineer Rouchaleau to issue the Notice to Proceed for the Barrier Free Park Phase 1 Improvements project.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

11. Old Business

12. New Business

a. Mayor Russ Barley

1. Liberty Partners Contract Renewal

Mayor Barley informed the Council members that it is time for the annual contract renewal with Liberty Partners. City Manager Charlie Simmons said that the first year had been rough, and he really had not been very happy with it. This past year was much better though; they had all worked well together and accomplished a lot for the city. He invited Tim from the Liberty Partners to speak to the Council.

Tim agreed that 2020 was a rough year and said the budget had been cut and everything they had put in had been vetoed. This past year was much better though. When the budget went before the Governor they had almost 2 million dollars in it for Freeport, for the US Hwy 331 Sewer project, the S. Jackson St. improvements, and the new community center. Unfortunately the governor vetoed the community center along with several other community centers across the state.

Since then they have worked on a couple of grants, one for the community center and a Wastewater grant with DEP. They work closely with City Manager Simmons and their president Jennifer Grant would like to set up a bimonthly phone call to coordinate everything. There are several new opportunities coming up; the Job Growth Grant fund is looking to "push money out", and they are working on the Triumph grant for Walton County.

Interim Committee week begins September 20, 2021. Legislative session begins early this year; it will be back January 11, 2022. If any of the Council members

would like to come to Tallahassee and speak with the legislative members he would be happy to try to arrange it.

Liberty Partners is very excited to work with the City. Mayor Barley thanked Tim and asked for questions; there were none.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

To approve Mayor Russ Barley to sign the contract with the Liberty Partners for another year.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

2. Christmas Decorations

Mayor Barley has been working on the Christmas decorations for the City; the Council had wanted some new ones throughout the city and he has many coming that he thinks they will be pleased with. There is one thing that he is a little hesitant about though, so he wanted to bring it before the Council members.

Mayor Barley had a company come out and give him an estimate for lighting the large oak tree in front of City Hall. The quote is for $855 for one year. They will install the lights in October and will remove them in January. He is just a little hesitant because it is only for one year, not for decorations that can be used year after year.

Councilwoman Haffner said that she is all for it; the community loves the decorations the city installs and this would give people a place to come out and take pictures. Councilman Farris agrees.

Parks & Recreation Director Travis Digges said it takes the city employees a week to put up the decorations we already have, not counting the new ones that have been ordered.

Councilman Farris pointed out that another benefit of hiring a company to do the install is that if one of the lights goes out, they will come and fix it. Councilwoman Brannon agreed, saying she thinks it is a good idea as well.

Mayor Barley told the council members he has the money in the budget. He requested approval from the council.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To approve Mayor Russ Barley to hire a company to light the large oak tree in front of City Hall at a cost of $855.00.

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

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Carried

3. City of the Year

Mayor Barley said that Freeport is being awarded the City of the Year because of the Veteran's Memorial Park. He will be going to Springfield, MO on September 16th and 17th to accept the award on behalf of the City. He will be flying.

4. Bayfest

Mayor Barley told the Council members that the Bayfest committee had been meeting and there were a few additions he wanted to bring to their attention. The flyers are almost ready to go out, and all of the entertainment is in place. The main attraction will be a band called The Springs; they are out of Nashville. There will also be cornhole, a Mullet toss, a cookoff, and horseshoes. Also, this year for the first time there will be a Miss Bayfest competition on October 9, 2021.

b. Councilwoman Brannon

c. Councilman Farris

d. Councilman Hope

e. Councilwoman Haffner

f. Councilman Martin

13. Public Comment

14. Adjournment

Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:22pm.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Interim City Clerk