

City of Freeport
SEPTEMBER 28, 2015 SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

I. Meeting Opened

The meeting was opened at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Russ Barley. The meeting was held in Council Chambers of City Hall.

Council members present: Councilman Eddie Farris, Councilwoman Kasey Cuchens, Councilwoman Janice McLean, Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon and Councilwoman Jennifer Laird.

Staff present: City Clerk Gary Mattison and City Planner Latilda Hughes-Neel.

II. Invocation & Pledge

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

III. 2015-2016 Tentative Budget

City Planner Latilda Hughes-Neel presented the draft Tentative Budget and support documentation to the Council (attached)

Council Action: Councilwoman McLean motioned to approve the Tentative Budget as \$4,754,038. Councilman Farris seconded the motion. 4 ayes (Farris, Cuchens, McLean and Laird). 1 nay (Brannon). Motion carried.

IV. Staff Accountant

City Clerk Mattison informed the Council that he had spoken with Joe Jennings by phone and received an e-mail from him withdrawing his acceptance of the Council's offer of employment as the Staff Accountant.

Council Action: Councilman Farris motioned to withdraw the offer to Joe Jennings for the Staff Accountant position. Councilwoman Brannon seconded the motion. All ayes; motion carried.

A. Staff Accountant Position Process

City Clerk Mattison reminded the Council that the job description for Staff Accountant had been tweaked at previous meetings to require a higher degree of financial experience. Mattison requested direction from the Council regarding re-advertising the position.

Councilwoman Cuchens: do we want to relook?

Councilman Farris: the selected candidate must be well qualified.

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Council Action: Councilwoman Cuchens motioned to re-advertise the position for Staff Accountant. Councilman Farris seconded the motion. All ayes; motion carried.

Council Action: Councilwoman Cuchens motion to contact the last 3 candidates which were interviewed for the Bookkeeper position to give them opportunity to re-interview before the Council, in addition to the new applicants. Councilwoman Laird seconded the motion. 4 ayes (Farris, Cuchens, McLean and Laird). 1 nay (Brannon). Motion carried.

B. Accounting Function Process

City Clerk Mattison stated that JoAnn Roque, an auditor from Carr Riggs & Ingram was coming over on Monday to evaluate the City's accounting system and give an overview.

C. Temporary Hires /Termination

City Clerk Mattison informed the Council that a temporary employee found through Career Source had been hired for the Billing Department. The temp had previously worked for CHELCO and understood the billing process.

Mattison also addressed the physical inventory of city property and equipment which is underway. The Freeport Regional Sports Complex, City Hall and the Community Center have not been completed. Mattison asked if the temps slated for termination could stay on until Friday, October 2.

Councilwoman Brannon recused herself from the discussion due to an immediate family member being one of the temporary employees being discussed. (attached)

Councilwoman Cuchens stated if the employees were illegal last Thursday, they are still illegal now.

Mayor Barley stated that he felt they should be given two weeks' notice.

Councilman Farris stated that the Council has to take the attorney's position.

Mattison stated that he could terminate the next day and perhaps they could reapply. He suggested that he could readdress with Clayton (Adkinson) Wednesday night.

Councilwoman Cuchens stated that clarification is needed.

Councilwoman Laird stated that most people in Freeport are related.

Councilman Farris stated that he had talked to Clayton following the past Thursday's meeting and he stated it was definitely illegal to hire family members; that you have to read the entire Statute.

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Council Action: Councilwoman Cuchens motioned that the two temporary employees who are related to Councilmembers be terminated tomorrow (9/29) and that the Council discuss the issue further with Clayton (Adkinson) at the Wednesday Special Meeting (9/30). Councilman Farris seconded the motion. 4 ayes (Farris, Cuchens, McLean and Laird). 1 recusal (Brannon) (attached).

Councilwoman Cuchens questioned City Clerk Mattison about accounting procedure without having a bookkeeper on staff.

Mattison responded that he had spoken to JoAnn Roque of the City's auditing firm Carr Riggs & Ingram and asked her advice. Her recommendation was that the Front Desk Clerk who is writing payroll also write all the checks and that they be signed by the City Clerk and the Mayor. The City Clerk reviews the invoices and the Mayor provides the oversight.

Councilwoman Brannon stated that the City needs to hire a temporary bookkeeper.

Councilwoman Laird stated that her business accountant has her own CPA business and she might be willing to help the City out temporarily. She (the accountant) worked with Carr Riggs and Ingram before opening her own business. Laird said she would approach her if the Council was open to that suggestion.

Councilwoman Cuchens stated that she was open to that suggestion.

Councilman Farris said he was open to the suggestion.

Councilwoman McLean stated that training on the Banyan system takes about 6 hours while on the phone with a Banyan representative.

Councilman Farris stated that Janice (Councilwoman McLean) could help a new person with getting to know the system.

Councilwoman Laird stated that most accountants are very computer program - savvy anyway because their clients all have different programs.

Councilwoman Cuchens stated that the City has to get a temp for accounting and she is comfortable with Janice providing that oversight.

Council Action: Councilwoman Cuchens motioned to hire a temporary bookkeeper with training through Banyan and assistance from Janice (Councilwoman McLean). Councilman Farris seconded the motion.

Councilwoman McLean stated she would be happy to teach the new person the system.

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Councilwoman Brannon stated that she agreed that a temporary bookkeeper needed to be hired but she did not agree for Councilwoman McLean to provide the training.

Council Vote: 4 ayes (Farris, Cuchens, McLean and Laird). 1 nay (Brannon). Motion carried.

V. Meeting Adjourned

Mayor Barley called for a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Mclean motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

CITY OF FREEPORT

Mayor

Council President

ATTEST:

City Clerk