

## **CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP MEETING**

**March 7, 2022**

**4:30 pm**

This Commission Meeting was conducted utilizing Communications Media Technology. Some Staff members were present in the Commission Chambers while others were present via the Zoom application to respect the social distancing guidelines.

### **ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:**

Shirley Groover Bryant, Mayor  
Tambra Varnadore, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 2  
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2 (Entered the meeting at 4:36 p.m.)  
Sheldon Jones, Commissioner-at-Large 1  
Harold Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1  
Brian Williams, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 3 (Entered the meeting at 4:33 p.m.)

### **STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:**

Mark Barnebey, City Attorney  
Xaiver Colon, Assistant CRA Director  
Jim Freeman, City Clerk  
Kera Hill, Development Services Supervisor  
Marisa Powers, City Attorney  
Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director  
Scott Tyler, Chief of Police  
Vanessa Cochran, Assistant City Clerk  
Penny Johnston, Executive Assistant

### **STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:**

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant

Mayor Bryant opened the meeting at 4:30 pm.

#### **1. EMPLOYEE OF THE FIRST QUARTER RECOGNITION**

The employee of the first quarter 2022, Robert Simpson, was present to accept the award announced at the last workshop. Mr. Rayan complimented Mr. Simpson on the award and service he provides to the City.

#### **2. REDISTRICTING ANALYSIS (Z. SCHWARTZ/M. BARNEBEY)**

Attorney Barnebey gave a brief summary on the redistricting analysis. Section 6 of the City Charter requires the City Commission to examine the Ward boundaries every 10 years in conjunction with the Census. Mr. Schwartz previously provided information to rebalance the Wards to less than a 1% difference. The Board asked for more detail and options. The current populations with the Ward boundaries differ by more than 10%, which is a concern.

Mr. Schwartz requested feedback from the Board on how to proceed.

Commissioner Jones commented on the 10% difference and was not in favor of making any changes. He stated the Charter did not require making a change if it is over 10%. He would prefer a special workshop to discuss the options and have an opportunity to draw

their own maps. He referenced Section 2 of the Redistricting Analysis and stated he did not think there had been enough growth to warrant a change in boundaries.

Commissioner Smith agreed with Commissioner Jones and stated that he was not in favor of making any changes. He preferred to wait to see where the growth occurs. He thought we should have started earlier and stated Ward 1 is "protected."

Commissioner Varnadore commented that she preferred to be below the 10% difference between Wards. She was open to whatever the Commission decided in order to get below the 10%.

Commissioner Williams asked Mr. Barnebey if we were required to change the boundaries and if it could be accomplished this year.

Attorney Barnebey responded the Charter required us to look at this and so did the Voting Rights Act. The 10% threshold is a general standard, but not set or defined in State Statute. The current population difference between wards is about 11%. Mr. Barnebey also stated it could be completed this year, but we would need to act soon.

Attorney Powers reported on her conversation with the Manatee County Supervisor of Elections and splitting Census blocks. There is no rule against splitting blocks, but it is not the most favored process.

Commission Williams also thought it might be appropriate to have consultant input. He also said it may not matter if it doesn't get done this year.

Mayor Bryant asked about the cost for an external consultant. Mr. Barnebey said he estimated \$15,000 to \$20,000. Attorney Powers indicated the County Supervisor of Elections would like to have it completed by March 12<sup>th</sup>, but there was not a deadline. The County and School Board have already submitted their changes.

Commissioner Cornwell agreed with Commissioner Varnadore that the City should get under the 10% difference even if it is slightly under the threshold. She liked Commissioner Jones' suggestion to consider bringing in Palmetto Trace to Ward 1.

Commissioner Smith still thought we needed more time to look at this issue so we did not have any issues. Attorney Barnebey thought any of the options would meet the requirements and he was also open to other scenarios. Commissioner Smith did not want any lawsuits, feels we could wait for 5 years, and see where the growth occurs. Attorney Barnebey stated there is a risk in waiting because we are above the 10% threshold.

Commission Jones asked again if we had to do something. Attorney Barnebey stated that the law required us to look at the boundaries. His recommendation was to get below the 10% threshold.

Commission Varnadore stated the Census is every 10 years so the next opportunity was in 2030. Attorney Barnebey stated it could be reviewed prior to that date. Commissioner Varnadore opined we needed to get just below the 10% and it appeared only about 75 people would be affected. However, she did not believe we would get it done before the election this year.

Commissioner Cornwell agreed with Commission Varnadore in that she did not want the City to be challenged.

Commissioner Smith asked who was challenging, because he felt someone in Ward 1 may challenge any change. Mr. Barnebey stated he was giving the best advice to the Commission, but the decision was up to Commission.

Commissioner Williams complimented Mr. Schwartz, but still believed a consultant should be involved.

Commissioner Varnadore said she preferred to make the adjustment this year before the election.

### 3. WOMAN'S CLUB RETURN ON INVESTMENT REPORT (X. COLON)

Mr. Colon introduced Janene Amick, CEO, Florida Cultural Group who completed a business report on the potential renovations at the Woman's Club and the feasibility of success.

Mrs. Amick volunteered to do the business analysis at no cost to the City. She reviewed the business aspects and demand for this type of facility. The presentation was made a part of the Minutes. In summary, it was her opinion that the renovated Woman's Club would be successful.

Commissioner Varnadore commented that the plan was well written and asked about the elevator lift. It is required for ADA access to the stage, it is not an enclosed elevator. She asked about the pricing on weekends of \$150 per hour with an 8 hour minimum. Mrs. Amick responded it was due to larger events such as weddings, which require extensive time for set-up and clean-up.

Commission Jones wanted to make it affordable for the community and offer possible discounts for Non-Profits.

Commissioner Smith liked the concept, but had some concerns about the pricing and thought it might need to be a little lower. Mrs. Amick said these were just averages and the Commission could adjust the rates.

Mayor Bryant, indicated that we needed to make some decisions because the building needs to be upgraded so it could be used by the community. She stated this meeting was a great opportunity to embrace this concept and move forward.

Commission Varnadore reiterated that for this project to be successful, we would need to move the basketball courts so not to interrupt outdoor events in the current location. Mr. Colon stated we were looking at options and understood this would need to be done before construction is complete.

Commissioner Williams liked the analysis and asked if there were other improvements that should be considered. Mrs. Amick said it is important to integrate technology into the

building. She opined if you have the opportunity to do all improvements at once, it would be more cost efficient. Clean restrooms which are readily accessible is a priority. The question of kitchen facilities was discussed and it was Mrs. Amick's opinion that they are not needed.

Commissioner Jones stated it is important to have a plan for the basketball courts prior to moving forward with these renovations. He also asked about turning the Sutton Park stage to face east. He would like a plan on these items. Mr. Colon talked about a few alternative locations for the recreational courts, but he felt both projects could move forward at the same time. He stated he was working on all of the items mentioned by Commissioner Jones, however, he asked to move forward with construction documents on the Woman's Club renovations.

Mayor Bryant adjourned the meeting at 5:51 pm.

MINUTES APPROVED: APRIL 4, 2022

***JAMES R. FREEMAN***

JAMES R. FREEMAN  
CITY CLERK