

MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION/CRA WORKSHOP MEETING
JULY 31, 2023
4:30 P.M.

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.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Shirley Groover Bryant, Mayor
Sheldon Jones, Vice-Mayor, Commissioner-at-Large 1 (left the meeting at 4:33 pm, and returned at 4:34 pm)
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2 (joined the meeting at 4:54 pm)
Sunshine Mathews, Commissioner, Ward 2
Harold Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1 (joined the meeting at 4:32 pm)
Brian Williams, Commissioner, Ward 3 (left the meeting at 5:47 pm)

STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Mark Barnebey, City Attorney (left the meeting at 4:43 pm, and returned at 4:44 pm)
Jim Freeman, City Clerk
Edward Johnson, Interim CRA Director
Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director
Scott Tyler, Chief of Police
Cassi Bailey, Assistant City Clerk
Penny Johnston, Executive Assistant
Cheryl Miller, Finance Director
Jenny Silverio, CRA Administrative/Compliance Coordinator

STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant

Mayor Bryant opened the meeting at 4:30 pm.

Mayor Bryant mentioned that all staff/Commissioners need to be up to date on their Knowbe4 cyber security training. She passed out a list to the Commissioners of anyone who was out of compliance. Mr. Freeman also mentioned that IT would be sending a list to each Department Head noting which of their employees are out of compliance.

1. **BUDGET DISCUSSION (J.FREEMAN/C.MILLER)**

Mr. Freeman gave a highlight of the budget, which was included in the Agenda. Mr. Freeman went through the first several pages of the included budget highlighting the revenues and expenditures being proposed. At the 7:00 pm Commission meeting, the Commission will have to establish a proposed millage, which will be communicated to the Manatee County Property Appraiser before August 4th, 2023. Once established, the millage rate may be lowered throughout the budget process, but it cannot be raised. He mentioned that under the vacancies for staff, the purchasing specialist has now been filled and will be starting in a couple weeks, and they had someone retire in Public Works as of today. Mr. Freeman highlighted the proposed 6% increase for general employees, and a \$5,000 increase to the base salary of police officers. The renewal cost for health insurance is projected at a 9% increase. Staff is also proposing the tentative budget hearing be on September 11, 2023 and the final budget will be on September 25, 2023. August 16th is scheduled as a budget workshop from 5:30-7:00 pm. If needed, August 28th will also be a budget workshop from 5:30- 7:00 pm. These are in addition to the regularly scheduled meetings on August 7th and August 21st.

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Mayor Bryant questioned the Commissioners desire to meet with the Department Heads regarding their budget questions. She suggested coming up with a particular day where the Commissioners could meet with Department Heads individually.

Commissioner Williams said he was advised to call and speak with them individually.

Mr. Freeman mentioned that for the special workshops (August 16th and August 28th), the agendas will be given to them a week in advance. Mr. Freeman expressed his surprise with the values increasing this year. It shows that our tax base is growing. At some point it will slow down. He thinks overall they've put together a good budget.

Commissioner Williams reiterated that with the proposed millage being set tonight, they can decrease it, but they can't increase it once it is set. He noted that tonight is the first time they've been able to discuss the proposed budget. He expressed a desire to allow more time in the future between initially discussing the budget, and the required date to set a proposed millage. Mr. Freeman responded that they would try to be mindful of that in the future. However, he noted the time constraints from when they receive their information from the property appraiser's office and the time they need to report the proposed millage is 35 days. That happens to fall during July, where only one Commission meeting is scheduled, per City Ordinance. They will try to look at scheduling next year to see if they can allow for more time.

Commissioner Williams asked if the vacant positions that are listed in the summary and positions that are currently being fulfilled with contract services are included in the budget. Ms. Miller confirmed that all the positions are funded. Ms. Miller spoke on the contract services and the process for decreasing those services if a permanent position is hired.

Commissioner Jones questioned the CRA adding a Code Enforcement officer to their budget. He also mentioned that he wasn't in favor of removing a police officer from the CRA's budget. He opined that there are positions in Public Works that need to be hired for. He reiterated his confusion with putting a code enforcement officer in the CRA's budget.

Mr. Rayan responded that they would be supervised by the Public Works staff. The three code enforcement officers would split the City/CRA. The whole team will be working concurrently. One would just be funded by the CRA.

Commissioner Jones was in favor of the 3rd officer, he just didn't understand why the CRA needed to fund it. Mr. Rayan explained that they try to stay within the departmental budgets, and this officer will mainly be working in the CRA. Mr. Rayan gave examples of different departments sharing costs. Mr. Freeman stated that typically when the CRA funds something it is for an elevated level of service. The new officer would be giving a focused level of service in that area. Mr. Barnebey reiterated that it would be for enhanced services, if it will be funded by the CRA.

Mayor Bryant mentioned that she is a certified Code Enforcement Officer. They took away the 3rd position in the past because they weren't having anyone apply at the time. She mentioned a program that is being done in St. Petersburg where the CRA and Code Enforcement work closely to enhance those areas.

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Commissioner Jones also questioned the Deputy Director position at Public Works. He questioned why they would need the Superintendent position, making 3 higher level positions. He thinks there only needs to be two positions. Mayor Bryant questioned how many projects they had going on at one time. Mr. Rayan answered that he had upwards of \$20 million worth of construction work he was managing at one time. Commissioner Jones reiterated his question of how they are going to pay for 3 high level positions. Mr. Freeman responded that the positions in budget one are fully funded.

Commissioner Jones questioned the Wastewater Treatment Plant, WWTP, bobcat telehandler and how that will help with the WWTP. Mr. Rayan responded. The bobcat will help them get further into the EQ tank and acts as a forklift at the end. It is a diverse piece of equipment. Commissioner Jones asked about the additional 2-10 yard roll offs. Mr. Rayan responded that they get banged up easily and they are all being utilized. Mr. Freeman mentioned the franchise agreement, which allows them to be used as rentals.

Commissioner Jones questioned the Sam's Club membership discrepancy between \$50 and \$55 memberships between cost centers.

Commissioner Jones questioned if Chief Tyler would be bringing the Community Policing Innovation Plan, CPIP, forward. Chief Tyler responded that it will be brought forward at the August 7th CRA meeting.

Commissioner Jones questioned Mr. Johnson on the events/festivals funding being removed. He's disappointed that it has been shifted. He hasn't seen anything that says they can't fund these festivals. Mr. Barnebey explained that they can promote the CRA at these events, but at some point, it is beyond the promotion of the CRA to fund the whole event. The referenced memo was from the FRA's legal team, that raised the question of whether they should continue funding those festivals. Commissioner Jones stated that he is raising the question because he doesn't think it says by law, they can't do it. Mr. Barnebey thinks they are going out on a limb if they fully fund it. The City can do it, or they can work with a 3rd party. The CRA could then help support it. Commissioner Jones thought they should continue to do what they've been doing. Mr. Barnebey would suggest getting the Attorney General's opinion to avoid liability.

Mr. Johnson wanted to clarify the email they got from the FRA. Florida Legislature's Action in 2019 explicitly says what they can use the CRA funding on. Nowhere in there does it say they can use those funds for entertainment festivals. He thinks they can either work with a 3rd party to fund these events, or have the City fund it. For years, legislatures have wanted to get rid of CRA's. He doesn't want to do anything to shine a negative light on the CRA.

Commissioner Johnson questioned the consultant fees in the CRA's budget. He didn't see the separation of Mr. Johnson's fees and other consultant fees. Mr. Freeman and Ms. Miller pointed out where he could find the separation in the budget.

Commissioner Smith questioned Mr. Johnson saying that the CRA can't act as a business in regard to the 4th of July and multi-Cultural festival. Mr. Johnson said the CRA can't operate as an events coordinator for these events. That is not what the CRA is supposed to do. Commissioner Smith doesn't want Mr. Johnson to change how they do things. He then questioned Mr. Johnson's CRA certification.

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Mayor Bryant adjourned the meeting at 5:47 pm.

MINUTES APPROVED: AUGUST 21, 2023

JAMES R. FREEMAN

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CITY CLERK