

ROBERTA M. CORREA
MAYOR - COMMISSIONER

TAMMIE McCASKILL
COMMISSIONER

JUSTIN R. CAMPBELL
COMMISSIONER

WILL JONES
COMMISSIONER

RUFUS J. BOROM
COMMISSIONER



TROY BELL, ICMA-CM
MPA, MS-Finance
CITY MANAGER

JANE WEST, ESQ.
CITY ATTORNEY

SUNNI L. KRANTZ, CMC
CITY CLERK

MARCIA G. CARTY, CPA
MS-Taxation
FINANCE DIRECTOR

JASON L. SHAW, SR
CHIEF, POLICE DEPT.

CHRIS TAYLOR
CHIEF, FIRE DEPT

MINUTES
CITY OF PALATKA
July 8, 2024

The minutes of the proceedings of the regular meeting of the Palatka City Commission held on Monday, July 8, 2024 at 9:00 AM at City Hall, 201 N. 2nd St., Palatka, FL 32177.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** The special called meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM at City Hall 201 N. 2nd Street. The following are the proceedings of that meeting.

- a. Invocation

An invocation was led by Chaplain Mulberry.

- b. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner McCaskill.

- c. Roll Call

Present:

Commissioner Tammie McCaskill

Commissioner Justin Campbell

Commissioner Will Jones

Commissioner Rufus Borom

Mayor Roberta Correa

Also Present: Troy Bell, City Manager; Jonathan Griffith, Assistant City Manager; Jane West, City Attorney; Sunni Krantz, City Clerk; Marcia Carty, Finance Director; Virginia Jones, HR Generalist; Peter Willott, Public Information Officer; Chris Taylor, Fire Chief; Jason Shaw, Police Chief; Matt Newcomb, Assistant Police Chief; Brad Forsythe, Police Captain; Kierra Kaymore, Customer Service/Records Clerk; Allegra Kitchens, former City Commissioner; Alonzo Mulberry, City Chaplain; Renee' Brown, Planning Clerk; Lorenzo Aghemo, Planning Director; Pam Butler-Hughes, Customer Service/Records Clerk; Allegra Kitchens, Shelley Shancker, Audrey Wise, Cheryl Roach, Askew Vickers, William Cobbs, Tarsha Givens, Jason Brown, Mary Lawson Brown, James Michael Borton, Alex Romero, Marcia Lane, Sarah Cavacini, Palatka Daily News

- d. Special Called Meeting Notice

The notice was read by the Clerk.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- a. **Public Comments** - (Speakers limited to three minutes - no action taken on items)

The floor was opened to public comment.

Allegra Kitchens 1027 S 12th St., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke in favor of the termination of Mr. Bell's contract
Shelley Shancker 287 E River Rd., East Palatka, FL 32131 - spoke in support of continuing the employment contract with Mr. Bell.

Audrey Wise 1610 More? St., Palatka, FL 32177 - asked the Commission to do what is right regarding Mr. Bell's employment

Cheryl Roach 312 Dodge St., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke regarding the Commission's actions

Askew Vickers 207 N 18th St., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke in opposition to today's meeting

William Cobbs 1310 Braunchon St., East Palatka, FL 32131 - spoke regarding ending racism.

Tarsha Givens 225 Stilwell Ave., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke regarding the need for transparency and indicated today's meeting is because the Assistant City Manager is being investigated.

Jason Brown 1609 St. Johns Ave., Palatka, FL 32177 - asked for additional information and time.

Mary Lawson Brown 107 S 9th St., Palatka, FL 32177 - empathized with the Commission as having been a former Commissioner that faced such decisions regarding City Managers.

Hearing no further requests to comment, the floor was closed to public comment.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. DISCUSSION AND ACTION regarding City Manager Troy Bell's employment with the City

Commissioner Campbell called today's meeting along with the Mayor. Commissioner Campbell advised a workshop with Mr. Bell has been done and because a meeting had not been set to follow up, a meeting for dialogue was called today. Today's meeting, a job of the City Commission, is required by the Sunshine law to be in an open forum. Mayor Correa advised more than 24 hours notice was given in an effort to provide reasonable notice to the public. Mayor Correa advised Mr. Bell's probation period ends in August. Commissioner Borom spoke in opposition to how the meeting was put out

Discussion commenced regarding Mr. Bell being out of the office last week. Commissioner McCaskill asked regarding whether Mr. Bell's absenteeism has caused a difficult work environment. Mayor Correa spoke regarding past City Manager's time off had been an honor system with emails from the City Manager sent to the Commission. Commissioner McCaskill spoke regarding Mr. Bell had entered his time in the time off system. The Human Resources Generalist approves his time off with the Clerk serving as a backup. Commissioner McCaskill indicated Mr. Bell has taken 15 days of his contractual allotted 20 days off. Commissioner Jones spoke regarding Mr. Bell working the weekends and holidays, such as Memorial Day Weekend. Commissioner Jones expressed he was aware Mr. Bell was out of the office last week prior to him leaving. He spoke regarding the need for a policy on time off and extra days worked. Mayor Correa expressed the need for the Commission to approve the Manager's time off. Mr. Bell spoke regarding the Human Resource's need to ensure that there is time in the system for the person to take off time. Also, the Charter requires the City Manager notify the Clerk when he will be disabled or unavailable.

Mayor Correa summarized we need a policy for time off.

Discussion commenced with Mrs. Jones regarding time off approvals. She spoke regarding the option to set up the system so that the Mayor is notified of the City Manager's time off requests.

Commissioner Campbell spoke regarding the need to give Mr. Bell direction prior to the end of his probation and regarding the need to come back with a discussion regarding the strategic plan and mission and vision of the City. He advised we need a meeting regarding the Strategic Plan and mission/vision. He recommended the Commission set a special called meeting for July 25th.

Motion by Commissioner Campbell to set a special called meeting for action on the strategic plan and mission and vision. Second by Commissioner Jones. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion continued regarding the possibility of the Mayor being added to the approval ladder to approve Mr. Bell's time off.

Commissioner McCaskill spoke regarding Staff feeling they are working in a difficult environment. She called for an independent audit regarding some concerns that she has with the practices of the City Manager. She recommended reaching out to the Florida League of Cities.

Motion by Commissioner Campbell to accept Commissioner McCaskill's item as an emergency item for discussion. Second by Commissioner Jones. Motion passed unanimously

Ms. West recommended Commissioner McCaskill consult the City's outside employment law firm, Marks Gray. Commissioner Campbell asked to seek the availability of Ms. Erdelyi so that she is available. Commissioner McCaskill advised she has already gotten guidance from Ms. Erdelyi that an independent investigation would be the next step.

Motion by Commissioner McCaskill for an investigation regarding the practices of the City Manager. Second by Commissioner Campbell. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Jones asked regarding Ms. Given's request that any improprieties or business dealings (see public comment) be looked into as well. Motion by Commissioner Jones to have this looked into. Ms. West advised that is outside of the scope of this meeting. The Mayor did not recognize the Motion.

Motion by Commissioner Campbell to add an item to the agenda as he was advised someone from administration may be benefiting from part of the deals and asked for an investigation to look into those matters to ensure we are operating in transparency. Second by Commissioner Borom. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Jones advised Mr. Bell is to lead investigations regarding his subordinates. The Manager's recommendation should be valid, but in light of Mr. Bell's investigation this should be an investigation.

Motion by Commissioner Jones to allow the City Manager to contact an independent investigator regarding improper conduct and conflict of interest that may be going on with employees. Second by Commissioner Borom. Motion passed unanimously.

Manager Bell advised he would remove the employee from contracts and projects that might be ethical questions.

Mr. Bell asked regarding the press depicting this as illegal or improper and asked to show nothing is illegal or improper. He advised all of the leave he took was to spend time with his family until they move to Florida.

4. ADJOURN Motion to adjourn at 10:37 AM

NOTICES: ANY PERSON WISHING TO APPEAL ANY DECISION MADE BY THE CITY COMMISSION WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT SUCH MEETING WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS, AND FOR SUCH PURPOSE MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS IS MADE, AT THE APPLICANT'S EXPENSE, WHICH RECORD INCLUDES THE TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE UPON WHICH THE APPEAL IS TO BE BASED. FS 286.0105

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES REQUIRING ACCOMMODATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING SHOULD CONTACT THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE AT 329-0100 AT LEAST 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE TO REQUEST ACCOMMODATIONS.