MINUTES
CITY OF PALATKA
October 14, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER Meeting called to Order at 5:05 PM.

    a. Invocation

The Invocation was led by Chaplain Mulberry.

    b. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was led by Ms. Carty.

    c. Roll Call

Present:
Commissioner Tammie McCaskill
Commissioner Justin Campbell
Commissioner Will Jones
Commissioner Rufus Borom
Representative Teresa Jackson (via telecommunications technology)
County Commissioner Terry Turner (via telecommunications technology)
Mayor Roberta Correa

Also present: Marcia Carty, Interim City Manager/Finance Director; Jane West, City Attorney; Sunni Krantz, City Clerk; Peter Willott, Public Information Officer; Joe Verecchio, Public Works Operations Manager; Chris Taylor, Fire Chief; Jason Shaw, Police Chief; Matt Newcomb, Assistant Police Chief; Yul McNair, Airport Manager; Alonzo Mulberry, City Chaplain (via telecommunications technology) ; Rick Paul, Small Business Development Center; Cheryl Roach, Annie Davis, Annie Svetlik, Benji Bates, Rick Surrency, Mark Litten, Laura Pavlus, Andrea Conover, Alice Cooper; Jeremy Alexander; Sam Deputy

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

    a. August 12, 2024

Motion to approve by Commissioner McCaskill. Seconded by Commissioner Borom. The Motion Passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS The floor was opened to public comment.

    Cheryl Roach 312 Dodge St., Palatka, FL - asked regarding various concerns along St. Johns Avenue including the flower pots, sidewalks, Christmas lighting, pressure washing, and the repair of the brick intersections, and other issues such as closure of little Crill Ave., revamping of the Building Improvement Grant, and spoke of concern of there being too many blighted properties.

Gail Powers, East Palatka speaking as a member of the Palatka Art League - asked what the outcome will be for the Tilghman House.

Upon hearing nothing further, the floor was closed to public comment.

Agency discussion commenced with Mr. Verrechio regarding the concerns raised above. Mr. Verecchio spoke regarding Ms. Roach's concerns, including the sidewalks and pressure cleaning. Mayor Correa spoke regarding Revitalize Palatka is to lead the flower planters effort. Commissioner Borom asked for weekly updates on the project of the planters. Commissioner Turner spoke regarding the City's need to reach out to Revitalize Palatka that were going to maintain the planters. Mr. Verecchio advised the closing of Short Crill will not take place until 2025.
Mayor Correa asked for an update on closing Short Crill on the next City Commission agenda.

Discussion commenced regarding the building improvement grant. Ms. West spoke regarding the difficulty applicants are having to prove full matching funds. Mayor Correa spoke regarding the difficulty in understanding the grant document. Commissioner Borom would like the Commission to discuss the matter further and he spoke regarding money that was awarded that has not been distributed yet.

Discussion commenced regarding the Tilghman House. Mayor Correa advised funds from the sale of the Hammock hall to be used to repair the Tilghman House. Ms. Carty advised she will research and report back. The Clerk advised that ITB 2024-14 and 2024-19 for the Tilghman House repairs did not receive responses.

4. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. DIRECTION/RECOMMENDATION - Small Business Development Center Memorandum of Understanding

Ms. Carty advised the cost of SBDC services have increased from $20,000 to $25,000.

Mr. Rick Paul, SBDC, 1100 Reid St., Palatka, FL 32177 advised the cost increased due to inflation. The County's cost also increased from $12,000 to $22,000.

Agency discussion commenced. Commissioners Jones and Borom spoke of concern that the City is being asked to pay more than the County.
Commissioner McCaskill suggested a middle ground amount of $22,500. Rep. Jackson asked if it is in the budget to use the funding, however she understands the compromise amount. Mayor Correa advised the $25,000 for the SBDC is in the budget.

Motion to recommend the contract in the amount of $22,500 by Commissioner McCaskill. Seconded by Commissioner Campbell. Motion failed 2 - 5, with Commissioners Jones, Borom, and Turner, Rep. Jackson, and Mayor Correa dissenting.

Motion to fully fund the amount by Commissioner Jones. Seconded by Commissioner Borom. Motion Passed 5 - 2, with Commissioners McCaskill and Campbell dissenting.

b. DISCUSSION/DIRECTION - Request for extension of CRA Building Improvement Grant project deadline - Svein Arild Bakken

Ms. Carty advised this is a request for an extension Mr. Bakken at 608 Oak St. to March 2025. The grant expired October 27, 2023.

The applicant, Mr. Svein Bakken, Palatka addressed the CRA. He has been back and forth from out of the country. He applied for the grant and received a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) about a year ago. By the time he received the COA, the grant had expired. He has been working on the project over the summer and would like additional time. Mr. Bakken advised two years ago when he wrote the application, he was not living at the site. However, Mr. Bakken is living at the location, now.

The City Attorney advised the requirement of the grant is to own property. Ms. West advised the applicant can reapply if this grant expires. There are concerns regarding the precedence this would set.

Agency discussion commenced. Commissioner Jones advised the precedent has been set in the past. Commissioner Borom expressed concern from a consistency standpoint of granting extensions and if it is okay that it be put in the policy. Commissioners McCaskill and Campbell expressed concern that Mr. Bakken was not assisted with understanding the deadlines of the grant.

Motion to grant an extension until March 2025 by Commissioner Campbell. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion unanimously.

Commissioner Campbell asked for the programs to come back to the CRA to provide additional direction to Staff. Mayor Correa responded we need to have a Grants Administrator in place first.

c. DIRECTION - hiring of the CRA Manager

Ms. Carty advised the budget included funding for a CRA Manager. Operationally, it would be helpful, if we had a CRA Manager who is clearly responsible for the successful development and implementation of the CRA.Ms. Carty advised it is an enormous task to stay on target with all the City's 61 projects (including those of the CRA).

Agency discussion commenced. Commissioner Borom expressed the City has had bad luck in the past with CRA managers. Mayor Correa responded the CRA Manager duties have always been rolled into another position's job duties, such as Main Street Manager and City Manager. Commissioner Borom and Rep. Jackson expressed concern the proposed job description overlaps with the Project Manager and Code Enforcement roles. Commissioners Jones and Borom and Rep, Jackson spoke in opposition to hiring a new CRA Manager while we have an Interim City Manager. Commissioners Campbell and Turner, and Mayor Correa spoke supported the Interim to hire the position. The Mayor advised the CRA needs direction in its last 20 years of existence and cannot wait until a new City Manager is found (which will be a few months from now).

The floor was opened to public comment:

Cheryl Roach 312 Dodge St., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke in support of hiring a CRA Manager.
Annie Svetlik 511 N 3rd St., Palatka, FL 32177 - advised 10 years ago we had a functioning CRA program. One reason, was that Ms. van Rensburg helped everyone complete paperwork. At that time, the program was funded for those with very low income. She suggested the CRA Manager could also be MainStreet Manager. She suggested having a task force that will help citizens fill out the paperwork.
Annie Davis - spoke in support of hiring a qualified individual that can execute the CRA plan. The City is moving toward stability and she spoke regarding supporting Staff.

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

Motion to move forward with implementation of a CRA Manager by Commissioner Campbell. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion Passed unanimously.

d. REQUEST - Elevate Putnam funding

Mr. Benjie Bates provided a presentation spoke regarding Elevate Putnam. He advised the previous City Manager suggested the CRA fund Elevate Putnam in the amount of $50,000 during the budget workshop. Mark Litten, Chamber of Commerce, Vice President of Economic Development spoke regarding a contractual agreement the Chamber has with Retail Strategies for additional increased retail, operations, restaurants, etc and work place development. Mr. Litten advised they do anticipate hiring a new position that would assist him in Economic Development. He advised they can target the funding from the CRA to the CRA districts.

Mayor Correa advised CRA funds can only be used in the CRA districts. Commissioner Borom advised it has to be in the Plan and budgeted. Ms. Carty advised the prior City Manager did recommend funding in the "Professional Services" general ledger line for Elevate Putnam. Mayor Correa advised the previous Manager took the $50,000 back out of Professional Services. Ms. Carty advised that the Capital Outlay line of Downtown District includes $133,000, so the funding is not presently in the correct line.

Commissioner Turner advised economic development is the most important thing we can do for the community. He spoke in support of the private-public partnership. He advised the County participates in economic development at a higher level than what is being requested.

Motion to move forward by Commissioner McCaskill. Seconded by Commissioner Campbell. The Motion Passed unanimously.

Following the Motion, Commissioner Borom asked that it be clarified the funding must be earmarked to the CRA. Ms. West, Commissioner McCaskill, and the Mayor expressed concern that it has to be strictly for the CRA. The Chamber of Commerce President, Laura Pavlus advised funding from the CRA can be put in a specific fund, not their general fund, to be earmarked for the CRA.

e. DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION to approve sidewalk and curb replacement at 4th Street/Oak Street/Laurel Street along the East and West Sides in the amount of $62,120.00.

Mr. Verecchio advised the block from Oak Street to Laurel Street, has all granite curbing and is also a brick street. When the granite curbing is pulled out, it does a lot of damage to the brick. The sidewalks are in bad shape and need to be replaced as well. Mr. Verecchio recommended to leave it as is. Ms. West advised this matter had been a citizen-driven request of Mr. Jefferson and Ms. Vogt that went to the previous City Manager, and then to the Board at the last meeting.

The floor was opened to public comment:
Jane West, Palatka - lives on South 4th Street which has granite curbing. She spoke in opposition to the granite curbing being removed.
Hearing no further requests to comment, the floor was closed to public comment.

Agency discussion commenced. Mayor Correa advised the granite curbing is historic to the street.

Motion to leave as it sits by Commissioner Borom. Seconded by Commissioner Campbell. The Motion Passed unanimously.

5. REPORTS

a. Small Business Development Center Report

Mr. Paul advised the SBDC's efforts include: 269 consulting hours and 839 workshops in the County. They have retained and created 37 business startups. They have capital formation up to 3.2 million, now. They have a lenders roundtable with the Small Business Administration. He would like to host two workshops, customer service and artificial intelligence with web and social media.

Commissioner Borom spoke regarding the need for business sustainability and asked for a campaign to reach out to businesses. Mr. Paul advised he assists clients when they come forward in ensuring their funding needs are met.

b. TIF/CRA Financial Report for the Year end September 30, 2024

Ms. Carty highlighted the financial report from the agenda packet. The CRA brought in revenue of $1,004,548 of which $800,000 we did not spend.

6. ADJOURN **Motion to adjourn at 6:25 PM by Commissioner Jones.**