MINUTES
CITY OF PALATKA
September 12, 2024

The minutes of the proceedings of the regular meeting of the Palatka City Commission held on Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM at City Hall, 201 N. 2nd St., Palatka, FL 32177.

1. CALL TO ORDER at 6:00 PM.

   a. Invocation

led by Chaplain Mulberry.

   b. Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Jones

   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; Jane West, City Attorney; Sunni Krantz, City Clerk; Marcia Carty, Finance Director; Virginia Jones, HR Generalist; Joe Verrecchio, Public Works Operations Manager; Peter Willott, Public Information Officer; Lorenzo Aghemo, Planning Director; Jill Keiser, Finance Supervisor; Rebecca Jones, Fire Administrative Assistant; Chris Taylor, Fire Chief; Jason Shaw, Police Chief; Brad Forsythe, Police Captain; Yul McNair, Airport Manager; Allegra Kitchens, former City Commissioner; Alonzo Mulberry, City Chaplain; and Eddie Cutwright, Community Affairs Director; Mark Lawson, Esq. (via telecommunications technology)
Askew Vickers; Tyronne Bennett; Tim Smith, former Mayor; Tim Jefferson; Erin Hewes; Charlie Douglas; Jeremy Alexander; Jeanetta Salyer; Elizabeth van Rensburg; Tavarence Clark; Annie Davis; Vicki Duke; Annie Davis; Alex Romero; Sam Deputy; Tobi McGuigan

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES **Motion to approve A - E by Commissioner Campbell. Second, by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion Passed unanimously.**

   a. July 25, 2024 Special Called Meeting

   b. August 6, 2024 Special Called Meeting

c. August 8, 2024 Regular Meeting

d. August 9, 2024 Budget Workshop

e. August 29, 2024 Budget Workshop

3. PUBLIC RECOGNITION/PRESENTATIONS

a. PROCLAMATION - U.S. Constitution Week - September 17 - 23, 2024 - Daughters of the American Revolution William Bartram Chapter

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

The Proclamation was presented to Meri Rees, regent, and the members of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). She invited the Commission to attend an event hosted by the DAR on September 15 at 3:00 PM at the First Presbyterian Church at the Riverfront to kick off Constitution Week.

b. PRESENTATION - Occupation of Palatka 2024 event, Robert Mattson

Mr. Mattson spoke regarding the Occupation of Palatka to occur September 27 - 29. It reenacts the time when the Union Army occupied Palatka in 1864. (See handout).

c. FLC University Certificates for Elected Municipal Officials
Justin Campbell, Sr. - Gold
Rufus Borom - Gold
Roberta Correa - Silver
Will Jones - Silver

The Clerk extended the congratulations from Greg Ross President of the Florida League of Cities for the Commissioners continuing education and presented the certificates.

4. CITY MANAGER AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS Mr. Bell advised the City is going to apply for a FRDAP grant for a splash pad at the Riverfront Park. Mr. Bell shared photographs showing the potential location. The grant objective is to make a destination space. The maximum amount of the grant is $200,000. Ms. Carty advised $375,000 is budgeted in next year's budget for a splash pad. The cost to install a splash pad can range between $200,000 - $800,000. We have also identified possible improvements to the band shell area. Commissioners McCaskill and Campbell expressed concern regarding the in-house ability and costs associated with maintaining a splash pad. The Commission encouraged the City Manager to reach out to other cities and the County regarding the maintenance of their splash pads. The Clerk advised there is a public information session hosted by the City Manager at 3:00 PM on Monday 9/16/2024 concerning the grant. Commissioner Campbell expressed concern regarding the time being during working hours and Mr. Bell responded there will be additional input sessions.

a. UPDATE - American Rescue Plan Act - Finance

Ms. Carty advised currently we have $1,242,000 of approved allocations of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. We have spent $1,190,000 of the funds. The balance to be reflected is $1,546,461 in the new budget. The original amount was $5,234,000.

b. UPDATE - Publication of Staff Updates for the Month

Mr. Bell advised a monthly update is in the packet. Highlights were provided by the department heads and himself and the Public Information Officer condensed the information. Commissioner Borom advised as issues arise, the Commission needs to know about them.

c. Cybersecurity Training

Mr. Bell informed the Commission almost 100% of Staff is in compliance with the cybersecurity training. The Commission still needs to do the cybersecurity training. The Commission asked that links to the state-required training be forwarded to them again.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

The floor was opened to public comment:

Askew Vickers 207 N. 18th St., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke of concerns the Police Department does not police private property.

Tyronne Bennett Palatka, FL 32177 - owner of Heart & Soul Eatery, spoke regarding the Blue Crab Festival and asked for additional communication during events to the local businesses. He expressed concern regarding notices that were not provided to his business during the 2024 Blue Crab Festival. He advised his business is on the verge of closing.

Tavarence Clark 601 N 16th St., Palatka, FL 32177 - alleged fraud and corruption in the City's transfer of his business. He expressed the City violated his constitutional rights in trespassing him from City Hall. He asked for an emergency item for fraud and discrimination.

Allegra Kitchens 1027 S. 12th St., Palatka, FL 32177 - asked the meeting be moved to Price Martin Community Center due to the number of attendees.

Joseph Bohn - advised he is not a child molester and asked why the Commission is going to close the casino.

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

   b. **Commission and Staff Response**

Commissioner Borom responded to Mr. Clark the City Manager and City Attorney have advised the City has not done anything illegal. Mr. Clark can hire an attorney. Ms. West advised if there is an emergency, then the City Manager can guide the Commission through the process. Ms. West indicated Mr. Clark is accused of grand theft. Commissioner Campbell spoke regarding the two different issues Mr. Clark is referring to. Commissioner McCaskill asked Mr. Clark to speak with the Chief of Police regarding his trespass. Mr. Bell advised City Staff is looking into the cost for the acquisition of the Business Tax Receipt.

Chief Shaw indicated he would be willing to meet with Mr. Vickers. In the past, the City Police Department spoke with Mr. Vickers concerning issues at his club. However, since that time, he has not heard from Mr. Vickers.

6. CONSENT AGENDA The following items were pulled for discussion item H (by staff) and item I (by Commissioner Jones).

   Motion to approve the consent agenda excluding items H and I by Commissioner Campbell. Seconded by Commissioner Jones. The Motion Passed unanimously.

   a. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-169 authorizing execution of grant agreement 25.h.sc.100.017 with the Department of State (DOS) for City of Palatka Bronson Mulholland House Rehabilitation in the amount of $367,900 with a City match requirement of $122,634 and contingency amount of $15,000 for total project cost of $505,534. Budget requested in FY 24-25.

   b. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-168 awarding a contract to BLD Services, LLC through a piggyback of BLD's contract with the City of Boca Raton for the lining of laterals within the sanitary sewer collection system along St. Johns Avenue in an amount not to exceed $202,950 (100% grant funded through FDEP Sewer Main & Manhole Lining project).

c. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-152 authorizing the execution of a Florida Department of Transportation Maintenance Agreement to maintain the right of way along State Roads15 (US 17), 20, and 100 for a three (3) year term.

d. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-160 authorizing the execution of the renewal agreement 2024-25 State Highway Traffic Signal Maintenance and Compensation Agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation for three (3) years.

e. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-173 authorizing execution of the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) 4486-106-R Modification to Grant Agreement H0977 for the City of Palatka - Wind Retrofit of the Palatka Fire Station - Moody Road (increase in grant funding of $175,000).

f. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-175 authorizing the execution of a Scope & Service Agreement with Hanson Professional Services in the amount of $28,000 to complete the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Operating Permit renewal application for the City of Palatka Reclamation Facility

g. Authorize execution of FAA and FDOT grant agreements for Kay Larkin Airport AGIS Survey, Property Map and Master Plan and Passero Associates work orders for the administration of said projects.

i) ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-86 authorizing the execution of a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant agreement 3-12-0061-039-2024 $137,025 (90%), and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) grant FM#425171-7 in the amount of $15,000 (10%) for a total project cost $152,025 to conduct an AGIS Survey and Exhibit A Property Map (required for the Airport Master Plan Update).

ii) ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-170 authorizing the execution of Passero Associates Work Order No. 2024-73B for the AGIS Survey and Exhibit 'A' Airport Property Inventory Map Project (not to exceed amount of $147,750) upon execution of the FAA and FDOT project grant agreements (100% grant funded by FAA & FDOT).

iii) ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-177 authorizing the execution of a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) grant agreement FM#446214-1-28J in the amount of $285,000 to conduct an Airport Master Plan and Layout Plan at Kay Larkin Airport.

iv) ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-178 authorizing the execution of Work Order 2024-73A with Passero & Associates for the Airport Master Plan and Airport Layout Plan in an amount not to exceed $285,000 (100% grant funded).

h. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-176 granting award of RFP 2024-15 Disposition of Real Property within the City of Palatka Community Redevelopment Area (specifically area within the 100 block of North 1st Street: St. Johns River Environmental Center) to Blue Crab Development Group North, LLC

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF PALATKA AWARDING REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) 2024-15 DISPOSITION OF REAL PROPERTY WITHIN THE CITY OF PALATKA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA TO BLUE CRAB DEVELOPMENT GROUP NORTH, LLC; AND PROVIDING FOR SCRIVENER'S ERRORS

Ms. West advised the RFP for the disposition of real property within the Community Redevelopment Area received one response . The response was opened Thursday morning and an evaluation committee met and recommended the RFP in the afternoon.

The floor was opened to public comment:
Charlie Douglas owner of the Blue Crab Development Group North, LLC that submitted the response spoke in support of the item.
Erin Hewes, Palatka, Florida - spoke in support of the land swap to continue working with partners to fully enable the St. Johns River Center to reach full potential.
Shann Purinton, Atlantic Beach, Florida (former Palatka resident) - spoke in support and regarding being on the Community Advisory Committee when the River Center was first built.
Shelley Schanker, East Palatka, FL, place of business, Palatka, FL - spoke in support
Tim Smith, Palatka, FL - spoke in support and spoke regarding the Commission's efforts many years ago to acquire the 100 block and put it into a place where it could be marketed.
Jeff Siegal, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - an Urban Planning Consultant, spoke in support, as it is in line with the City's strategic plan.
Sandra Gilyard - spoke in support of Mr. Douglas and his vision
Sharon Harris, Francis, FL - spoke in support and advised Dr. Rick Surrency, Superintendent of Schools who is at Palatka Jr./Sr. Homecoming is also in support.
Jeremy Alexander, 134 Timber Ln., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke in support.
Dr. Richard Feibelman, 110 Lake Shore, Terr., Interlachen, FL 32148 - co-owner of Velchoff's (which is in the same block as the River Center), spoke in support.
Allegra Kitchens 1027 S 12th St., Palatka, FL., 32177 - spoke in support.

The floor was closed to public comment.

Ms. West advised the respondent included the contract in the packet, so in the proposed Resolution, the "now, therefore clause" that indicates Staff would bring back a contract would have to be stricken if the Resolution is passed.

Commission discussion commenced with the City Manager. Mr. Bell advised if the Commission does not desire to obtain the former Port Consolidated building, the Commission would need to deny this RFP response.

The Manager spoke on the pros and cons of the contract, which would essentially provide for a land swap of the City's St. Johns River Environmental Center property for the "Port Consolidated" property and funds to make up the difference in appraisal values. The public has expressed concern over whether the River Center will remain available to the public. Mr. Douglas has given his commitment that it will be. However, it is up to the Commission whether to trust his promise. He also spoke regarding weighing whether the property should be on the market. He spoke of the remediation efforts of the Port Consolidated property. He asked the Commission to identify a vision for the Port Consolidated property. The Manager indicated if the Commission wanted to renovate the Port Consolidated building they would spend upwards of $300,000, - $400,000.

Commissioner Borom advised he supports the project but not the proposed contract. He spoke regarding experiences with Mr. Douglas. He spoke of the environmental cleanup that may take a long time. He spoke regarding the City's need for additional facilities and under-utilizing other facilities. Commissioner Jones spoke regarding the unknown cost of renovating the Port Consolidated building and the Brownsfield. The Mayor spoke regarding the tanks having been removed at the Port Consolidated property. Ms. West advised because of all the boring samples required by Florida Department of Environmental Protection, there was only 1 testing at a minimum level.

Commissioner Jones asked if Mr. Douglas would consider a sale and purchase with no swap. The Manager responded the proposal submitted is a swap. If this RFP is not awarded, the City could negotiate to buy the Port Consolidated property or sell the River Center. Ms. West spoke regarding the response including the many events that Blue Crab Development Group would handle at the River Center, if this is a straight purchase and/or sale, it would not include the guarantee to keep the site open for events.

Motion by Commissioner McCaskill to approve, Second by Commissioner Campbell.
Motion amended by Commissioner McCaskill to strikethrough paragraph 2 and accept it. Commissioner Campbell accepted the amendment. Motion passed 4 - 1 with Commissioner Borom's dissent.

i. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-180 authorizing a financial commitment in the amount of $570,277 to fund the Florida Department of Transportation landscape median at the foot of the bridge and decorative lighting improvements on the Reid Street corridor from the foot of the bridge to the railroad tracks project.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF PALATKA, AUTHORIZING A FINANCIAL COMMITMENT DURING FY 2024-25 FOR THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) MEDIAN AND DECORATIVE LIGHTING PROJECT ALONG REID STREET; AND PROVIDING FOR SCRIVENER'S ERRORS

Representatives of FDOT addressed the Commission. David Shearer spoke regarding the lighting presently in the roadway corridor now. This would replace the lighting from Memorial Bridge to 11th Street with decorative lighting. They are proposing a teardrop light. The poles upon which the lights are hung will be 100 ft apart. They will be placed as close to the back of the sidewalk as possible.

Commissioner Jones spoke regarding FDOT stance that two medians are needed on Reid Street versus the Commission's opinion that just one median is necessary. Commissioner Jones advised the Commission is in support of area 1 but not area 2 . They want the median to end and leave what is there now. Mr. Shear advised to just have one median, FDOT would have to build it to end at the end of the right side of the first page of the handout. Mr. Shearer explained FDOT feels that adding two medians will reduce accidents. Wes Weiser with FDOT spoke regarding the traffic counts that would meet the median requirement. The traffic is showing it would be a good thing. They want to prevent U-turns from and into Memorial Bridge . Mr. Shearer advised if we are having issues with traffic issue would be in an another place.
Commissioner Borom asked for someone from FDOT to view the traffic coming from the bridge during 5:00 pm. Commissioner McCaskill also asked for FDOT to do a traffic study. Commissioner Campbell spoke in support of moving forward. Mr. Wes Weiser advised they could extend the left turn lane, however they were trying to maximize landscape while having a turn lane as long as needed. Mayor Correa spoke in support of landscaping. Mr. Weiser advised the FDOT Safety Team has reviewed this and blessed it the way presented. He advised if you present one then you have to present another median. They advised the City will fund one median and FDOT will fund the other.

Mr. Shearer advised the decision on funding needed to have occured last month.

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

Commissioner Campbell asked FDOT to look at the traffic light on 9th Street and Reid and 9th St. and St. Johns Ave. as they are not synchronized. Commissioner Borom asked them to look at road in the South Historic area where the no entry is going around Reid Street. Mr. Weiser advised it is another project . Mayor Correa advised another member of FDOT, Mr. Driggers, is handling that project.

j. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-182 authorizing a lien reduction for a code enforcement lien reduction at 604 Bronson Street.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. ADOPT ORDINANCE 2024-09 establishing procedures for quasi-judicial proceedings - 2nd reading continued from August 8, 2024

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF PALATKA, FLORIDA, CREATING MUNICIPAL CODE SECTIONS 54-1 THROUGH 54-6, ESTABLISHING PROCEDURES FOR QUASI-JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND PROVIDING FOR SCRIVENER'S ERRORS.

The floor was opened to public hearing. Upon hearing no requests, the floor was closed to public comment.

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

b. Amending Future Land Use Map and Rezoning Parcel: 09-10-26-0213-0000-0010; 09-10-26-0231-0000-0020; and 09-1-26-0231-0000-0030 located on Kelly Smith School Road

i) ADOPT ORDINANCE 2024-07 amending the future land use map of 09-10-26-0231-0000-0010; 09-10-0231-0000-0020 and 09-1-26-0231-0000-0030 from the City of Palatka Commercial (COM) to City of Palatka Residential Low (RL) - adoption

ii) ORDINANCE 20240-08 amending the zoning map of 09-10-26-0213-0000-0010;C; 09-10-26-0213-0000-0020; 09-10-26-0213-0000-0030 from City of Palatka General Commercial (C-1) to Residential Single Family (R-1) - first reading

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF PALATKA, FLORIDA, PROVIDING THAT THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BE AMENDED WITH RESPECT TO THE FOLLOWING PARCEL OF LAND (LESS THAN 50 ACRES IN SIZE) FROM CITY OF PALATKA COMMERCIAL (COM) TO CITY OF PALATKA RESIDENTIAL LOW (RL) FOR THE FOLLOWING PROPERTY LOCATED ON KELLEY SMITH SCHOOL ROAD, PALATKA, FL 32177, PARCEL NOS.: 09-10-26-0213-0000-0010, 09-10-26-0213-0000-0020, AND 09-10-26-0213-0000-0030, CONTIGUOUS TO THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CITY OF PALATKA; AND PROVIDING FOR SCRIVENER'S ERRORS; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mr. Aghemo advised this is a small-scale future land use map amendment and rezoning request for three new lots on Kelley Smith School Road. The application meets the requirements of the statutes. Staff recommends approval of both Ordinances.

Patrick Kerchowski, Jacksonville, FL representing the applicant addressed the Commission. He advised the only owners are present Tobi McGuigan and Josh Anderson. Mr. Kerchowski advised he submitted information to Mr. Aghemo and the City Manager showing the change to the ownership structure.

Commissioner Campbell spoke regarding an inquiry being ongoing and the desire to know all that is going on. Commissioner Jones spoke regarding the need to be clear on all information available. Ms. West clarified we have an applicant who has advised there is presently no ownership interest of the previous Assistant City Manager. Unless we have confident substantial evidence, there are significant legal ramifications if this is not approved. Ms. West advised if this is postponed, pending an inquiry, there can be legal ramifications depending on the length of the investigation. Mr. Bell advised the preliminary report has been shared with the Commission and anticipates the inquiry will take 2 weeks longer maximum. Commissioner Jones expressed desire for the investigation to be complete prior to bring it back. The Manager was confident it would be complete before the next meeting date. The Clerk advised a specific dates needs to be set due to advertising requirements.

Motion to table to a time and date certain of the next meeting date of September 26 at 6:00 PM by Commissioner Jones. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion Passed 4 – 1 with Mayor Correa dissenting.

The City Attorney advised the Motion above applied to the rezoning ordinance 2024-08 also.

c. ORDINANCE 2024-12 establishing a ban on Internet Cafe's within the City limits of Palatka (first reading)

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF PALATKA, FLORIDA, CREATING MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 59, SECTION 59-1 THROUGH 59-6, REVISING MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 94 SECTION 94-209, BANNING INTERNET CAFES AND OTHER UNLAWFUL SIMULATED GAMBLING DEVICES FOR COMMERCIAL, PROMOTIONAL OR PECUNIARY GAIN OR LOSS, PROVIDING FOR EXEMPTIONS, ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES, PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND PROVIDING FOR SCRIVNER'S ERRORS.

Ms. West advised this stemmed from a 2013 law signed by Governor DeSantis that banned internet gaming but left it to the local governments to enforce. The internet cafes have been posing an increased threat to public safety as they continue to operate basically as gambling operations.

Chief Shaw spoke regarding the need to correct the situation. He spoke of incidents when the business knows Police Department is in the parking lot and they shut down. This has caused it to be extremely difficult to witness the alleged actions they are locking doors and only buzzing people in. He advised we have had robberies at the internet cafe's, although not recent. He advised by law the cafes are not allowed to give cash especially above a certain limit. The establishments are being patronized because they are giving cash.

The floor was opened to public hearing:

Tavarence Clark - advised this is being brought up because of his matter. He spoke of illegal gambling at the Middleton Shopping Center.

Allegra Kitchens 1027 S 12th St., Palatka, FL 32177 - spoke in support. She spoke of illegal gambling at the Middleton Shopping Center. She asked if this would apply to illegal gambling machines.

Shawn Harris, Palatka, FL - spoke in opposition and spoke of the fun of patronizing these establishments.

Crystal Rockwell, Hawthorne, FL - spoke regarding an incident a couple years ago. The internet cafe's are paying their business taxes.

[Also see general public comment section above.]

The floor was closed to public hearing.

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

d. ORDINANCE 2024-10 combining Sections 30-214 and 30-215 concerning the registration of vacant structures and foreclosed blighted, unsecured, or abandoned structures and amending the City's fee schedule (Appendix A) (first reading)

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF PALATKA, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE PALATKA MUNICIPAL CODE COMBINING SECTIONS 30-214 VACANT STRUCTURE REGISTRATION AND 30-215 FORECLOSED, BLIGHTED, UNSECURED, OR ABANDONED STRUCTURE
REGISTRATION; AND AMENDING APPENDIX A (FEE SCHEDULE) OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF

PALATKA AS IT PERTAINS TO FEES AND OTHER CHARGES RELATING TO: CHAPTER 10. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, CHAPTER 30 REGISTRATION OF
VACANT, BLIGHTED, UNSECURED OR ABANDONED STRUCTURES, CHAPTER 50. PARKS AND RECREATION, CHAPTER 54. PLANNING, CHAPTER 62. SIGNS, CHAPTER 74. SUBDIVISIONS, CHAPTER 78. TAXATION, CHAPTER 94. ZONING; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT, SEVERABILITY, EFFECTIVE DATE, AND SCRIVENER'S ERRORS.

Ms. West advised this is a clean up of two provisions of the municipal code (secs. 30-214 and -215), as they were duplicative and amending the fee schedule, which is done annually in conjunction with the preparation of next fiscal year's budget.

The floor was opened to public hearing. Hearing none, the floor was closed to public comment.

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

e. First Public Hearing - Proposed Millage Rate and Budget for fiscal year 2024-25 6.4000 mills proposed.

i) ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-174 Setting the Proposed FY 2024-2025 Millage Rate at 6.4000 Mills

The Mayor explained tax assessment exceptions were due on September 10, 2024 to the Property Appraiser. This is the first budget hearing and first hearing on the millage rate. Information was provided by the Finance Director on why proposed millage rates differ from the rolled back millage rates. The proposed aggregate operating millage rate is 6.4000 mills, 4.45% greater than the rolled back rate of 6.1271 mills.
The total tentative budget is $75,985,566.

The floor was opened to public comment. Hearing none, the floor was closed to public comment.

The Mayor entertained a motion to make any adjustments to the budget. Ms. West advised further in the agenda we will consider the fire assessment. There were no motions to adjust the budget.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF PALATKA, ADOPTING THE PROPOSED AND TENTATIVE OPERATING MILLAGE RATE FOR THE PURPOSE OF LEVYING OF AD VALOREM TAXES FOR THE CITY OF PALATKA, PUTNAM COUNTY, FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025; AND
PROVIDING FOR SCRIVENER'S ERRORS

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

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

ii) ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-181 Adopting the Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25 in the amount of $75,985,566.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF PALATKA OF PUTNAM COUNTY, FLORIDA ADOPTING THE TENTATIVE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE, AND PROVIDING FOR SCRIVENER'S ERRORS

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

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

Ms. Carty asked that the final public hearing of the millage rate and budget be scheduled for September 26, 2024 at 6:00 PM
The floor was opened to public comment. Upon hearing nothing further, the floor was closed to public comment.
Motion to approve date and time by Commissioner McCaskill. Seconded by Commissioner Borom. Motion Passed unanimously.

8. REGULAR BUSINESS

   a. Recess for 10 minutes at 7:30 PM.

Recess at 7:39 PM. Meeting resumed at 7:50 PM.

   b. PRESENTATION AND INPUT on Draft of the Palatka Vision Plan - Northeast Florida Regional Council

Mr. Aghemo advised this study will provide the basis for the update to the Comprehensive Plan.
Mr. Jack Shad with the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) provided a draft of the Palatka Vision Plan. He spoke of the importance of Palatka to the area surrounding Palatka. He spoke regarding the growth of Palatka and the desire to keep young people in the town. He spoke of the Planning Board's desire to see more tree canopy. He spoke of the potential of history outside of downtown.
Another part of the project was to look at where the Comprehensive Plan did or did not meet the desires of residents. Mr. Shad hopes to have this approved as a resolution at the next meeting. He asked for input of the Commission.

Commissioners Borom and Campbell spoke of the thoroughness of the Plan by the NEFRC.

   c. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-150 awarding ITB 2024-12 City of Palatka Restroom Construction, Hank Bryan Park to ER Rooter, Inc. in an amount not to exceed $73,000 (continued from the August 8th meeting)

Mr. Verrechio advised the picture in the packet is not completely what it will look like. He says it is the closest picture they could obtain. Mr. Verrechio advised the quotes other than this one before the Commission, received were well over $73,000. The County designed this restroom building free of charge for us. He advised there are $20,000 in costs before even building the structure, including a 200 gallon pump station with a half horsepower grinder, water run, electric serve, slab, etc. Mr. Verrechio advised if we altered the bathroom design, we would have to put it back out to bid. The "mechanical" area will have an electrical panel and a small area for storage. There will be a 4 ft mechanical room, and 10ft. bathroom.

Commission discussion commenced. Commissioners McCaskill and Campbell expressed concern of how the exterior will look. Commissioner Jones and McCaskill expressed concern of the mechanical room being wasted space. Commissioner Borom expressed desire to have two stalls.

Motion to deny 2024-R-150 and go out for bid by Commissioner Campbell. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion Passed unanimously.

   d. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-172 authorizing the execution of the Second Renewal Agreement with RQ Music LLC for the 2025 Blue Crab Festival

Ms. Jeanetta Salyer Cebollero of RQ Music, LLC addressed the Commission . She spoke of concerns regarding who “owns” the Blue Crab festival, whether she is applying for a permit or there is a contract for her to be a promoter. RQ Music, LLC is a holding company. The first year, the City held the Blue Crab jointly with her and were on the bank accounts. In subsequent years, the City became a sponsor, only cutting a sponsorship check. Typically sponsors do not have specific program obligations. (A “Crab Pot” idea to increase the festival to 6 event days is out of the mix.) Discussions now are regarding whether to have a 4- day festival (to include Monday). In a draft agreement, she advised the City asked to increase from 3 to 4 days, which would increase the number of headliners, and to increase the fireworks show length from 14 – 22 minutes, which increases fireworks cost by $14,000. She explained that when someone adds to her scope of services, in this manner, they become a co-producer. Another concern was due to the time of year, as she will have less time to fundraise. Her biggest concern was to work under good conditions and with transparency. She indicated it is imperative to have a cancellation clause to excuse her from performance if that is not the case.

She spoke regarding multiple meetings with City Staff. She was under the impression that when she attended the meeting on August 29th this was recommended in her purview. She advised she explained at her presentation that she needed to buy her talent at one time. She had a contract renewal meeting (Mr. Cutwright, Mr. Bell, Ms. West, and Ms. Carty) and was sent a draft contract. Later, she signed documents and picked up a check. She advised she was the only one who signed a document.

Mayor Correa advised the Commission did not approve funding. Ms. Salyer advised she received funding for the renewal of the existing contract and she was under the impression today's meeting was to increase or not to increase the sponsorship and whether to move forward as only a sponsor.

Mr. Bell explained the presentation was made to the CRA for an agreement for $150,000 with a cost share over a multiple year period. It was clear that was not the way the Commission desired. Also, it appeared we would need a new RFP for that. As a result of the conversation with the CRA, we negotiated an agreement for $75,000 for 4 days. Some items were added. He advised she received a copy of that agreement and Ms. Salyer was in agreement except concern of the cost of staff which is around $23,000 - $25,000. She asked that the City take care of that fee, however determined it is included in the contract.

The Mayor explained the CRA and the Commission are two different bodies and the CRA is not a funding source. So, the matter would need to go to the Commission. However, the matter did not go to the Commission, but money was released. The Mayor advised anything above $25,000 would need to go to the City Commission. The Manager advised because Ms. Salyer advised a decision needed to be made before September 1, and the next Commission meeting would not be until September 12, a $75,000 agreement would require them to go to the Commission. He advised Staff (City Attorney) told him he could renew the contract at $50,000. He advised he wanted to position the Commission so that we would not lose the Blue Crab Festival promoter and give the Commission opportunity to decide.

Ms. West advised the Commission that the Manager told her to draft a renewal to the contract prior to the next day. She advised she was unaware Mr. Bell was going to have the draft executed by the vendor without approval. Ms. West advised the Purchasing Policy indicates that matters not budgeted would go to the Finance Director. Our Finance Director told the Manager this would need to go to the City Commission for approval. Ms. Carty advised when she knew the City Manager needed guidance, she and her Staff reviewed the Purchasing Policy on Thursday evening with the Manager and explained his authority is limited at $25,000. He told her to have a $50,000 check by noon. She added that Mr. Bell gave her the impression that the City Attorney had advised him he could move forward with $50,000. Ms. West and Ms. Carty advised they both advised Mr. Bell in writing that he could not proceed.

Ms. West advised additional days and additional scope of work, would require a new request for proposals to be issued.

Commissioner Campbell asked to address whether the Commission wished to renew the Contract, continue negotiations with Ms. Salyer, or issue a new RFP.

Ms. Salyer advised after Labor Day weekend the cost of talent increases. She buys talent for all her events at one time in order to receive a discount.

Commissioner McCaskill and Mayor Correa advised they spoke with Mr. Bell only after the check had been written. Commissioner Campbell advised he received communication prior to the check being cut, and Mr. Bell told him the Attorney had given an opinion that he could do it. Commissioner Campbell did not know the check had already been cut. He became aware once he was told the City was trying to get the check back. At that time, he was told that another Commission was willing to call a Special Called meeting.

Ms. Carty responded her department printed the check under the direction of Mr. Bell. She was aware that the check was going to be made, however she was not aware that the check had been given to Mr. Bell or Ms. Salyer until it had been given, at which time she desired to void the check.

Mr. Bell advised per the Purchasing Policy emergency circumstances allowed him to authorize the check and it was an emergency because the promoter would have walked if she did not have a check. Mr. Bell advised Ms. Salyer told him she would refund the funds if the Commission did not approve the contract on September 12. This allowed him to position the Commission to make the final decision.

Mayor Correa advised the situation did not constitute an emergency. Commissioner McCaskill advised while Ms. Salyer is a phenomenal festival producer, if she had walked away from the Blue Crab Festival, the City would have gotten another promoter.

Discussion continued regarding Commissioner Campbell and McCaskill spoke regarding the timeline of events of communication from Mr. Bell. Commissioner Campbell advised he was under the impression that Mr. Bell had communicated with the other Commissioners (except Commissioner Borom). The Mayor advised he did not speak with her. Commissioner Campbell advised he was under the impression Commissioner McCaskill was willing to call a Special Called meeting. Commissioner Campbell spoke regarding the Clerk's efforts to reach out to the Commission following that. Commissioner McCaskill advised she questioned the Manager whether he could issue the check. She received a text message from Mr. Bell that she and Commissioner Campbell would be calling a special called meeting. Commissioner McCaskill advised she was not willing to call a meeting and expressed she did not want to be in the habit of calling special called meetings. She advised the Clerk she would be unable to attend a special called meeting. Commissioner Borom advised the Clerk reached out to him but he was out of the country.

Ms. Salyer advised she was provided a printed check which she deposited once she received. Ms. Salyer advised Ms. Carty called her and asked her if she had deposited the check.

Ms. Salyer spoke regarding Staff turnover for the last 3 years, which has caused re-explaining on what her job is. Because of this, Ms. Salyer advised if this was to go out for RFP this year, she would not have the time to respond. Ms. Salyer advised she was presented a check and told she was doing the Blue Crab festival for $50,000 and at September 12, the Commission would discuss the other $25,000.

Ms. Salyer advised since receiving the check, she has been working on the Blue Crab talent. Because she received the check, she thought she had a deal.

The Mayor advised there are two different issues, one was the issue with Ms. Cebollero (and the other issue).

Ms. Carty advised Mr. Cutwright provided her information that Ace Alliance owes $23,385 to the City for services provided to the promoter last year. Ms. Salyer spoke of timing being the reason the City permit fees are due from the prior year around the same time as when a contract for next year is written.

Ms. Salyer spoke regarding the City permitting another entity to sell alcohol which caused a lost. She spoke

regarding the need to define sponsorship. Ms. Salyer advised the contract would be $50,000 for 3 days, and $75,000 for 4 days. She advised she will pay the $23,000. Commissioner Borom spoke regarding the amount starting at $150,000 and that we are looking to end at $0. He referenced Ms. Salyer has built up the festival and has the ability to make money. Ms. Salyer advised the first year she handled the Blue Crab Festival, the contract amount was $165,000, the next year it was $75,000, then it was $50,000.
Ms. Salyer advised when the City double-books someone to sell alcohol, she suffers a loss.

She advised she desires to establish whether the Blue Crab Festival is the City's or a private entity's. Commissioner Borom spoke regarding the City saving the Blue Crab Festival (three years ago) after a couple non-profits tried. He advised Ms. Salyer helped put value into this and the Commission helped seed the event. She advised she presented a seed mechanism at the CRA meeting.

Commissioner Borom continued regarding the need for Ms. Salyer to pay for city services. Ms. Salyer referenced the City code provides that the City does not charge for services at a City-sponsored event. Commissioner Borom advised the event is put on by Ms. Salyer and is a public-private partnership.

Ms. Salyer advised the contract for 3 days would be $50,000 or a 4-day festival would require a $75,000 sponsorship. Commissioner Campbell spoke in favor of leaving the event at 3 days. She advised she produces shows to bring people together.

Ms. Salyer spoke regarding the timing of paying for services of the City the past year happening around the same time as the sponsorship for the next year. Commissioner Jones spoke regarding the need to be involved in the after-action reports of the Blue Crab festival. He spoke regarding policy not being followed.

Commissioner Jones advised policy was not followed and it needs to be addressed.

Motion to move forward with $50,000 as an event sponsor by Commissioner Campbell. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Campbell asked when to handle a disturbing matter. Mayor Correa suggested coming back to the matter under employment matters.

e. DIRECTION - River Street retaining wall

Mayor Correa advised this is a time-sensitive matter as it is on the Special Magistrate's hearing for Tuesday.

Motion to table this to the September 26th meeting and to remove from Tuesday's special magistrate hearing by Commissioner Campbell. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion Passed unanimously.

f. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-R-171 amending Resolution 2024-R-139 to slightly reduce the variable tier rate

Ms. Carty addressed the Commission. Staff has looked at options to reduce the variable tier of the Fire Assessment Fee. The Fire Assessment has 2 tiers, a fixed tier, and a variable tier. The fixed tier is $125 and the variable tier is $2.35. This is a reduction from $2.46. The $0.11 reduction means the revenue of the fire assessment decreased by $73,000.

Commissioner Jones asked if it is possible to reduce the fixed rate. Ms. Carty advised we need funds to pay the Fire Department's operating expenses. If we are looking at reducing further, we would need to look at a reduction of capital budgeted items.

Mark Lawson the City's attorney for the Fire Assessment, advised the law requires the City certify the roll to the Tax Collector on Sept. 15 (because that's a Sunday this year, it will be September 16). He advised he can look into a reduction of the fixed tier in future years but we are short on time at this time. The more the City will reduce, the more that will affect the fire department. Commissioner Jones tasked Mr. Lawson with finding a way to reduce the fee, while still funding the Fire Department.

Motion to approve by Commissioner Campbell. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion unanimously.

9. EMPLOYMENT MATTERS Mayor Correa advised the Commission needed to discuss the incident of not following policy and the check issue in regards to Mr. Bell.

   Motion to add an administrative situation as new business by Commissioner McCaskill. Second by Commissioner Borom. Motion passed unanimously.

   Commission discussion commenced. Commissioner McCaskill asked if it is normal for City Managers to write checks over $25,000. Mayor Correa advised the Manager does not have the authority to write checks over $25,000 and violated a policy. Commissioner McCaskill summarized the Commission has identified that the City Manager violated a policy and asked what the Commission will do.

   Mayor Correa passed gavel to Commissioner Jones.

   Commissioner Borom advised it is a violation and advised there is an alternative for the Commission would like to give the Manager time off without pay to send a message. Commissioner Campbell advised the Commission needed to consider the potential jeopardy this could have put the City in. He spoke regarding potential additional things that could jeopardize the integrity of the City. He advised sometimes we have to accept there is a character flaw. He advised there have been a lot of things, other than issuance of the check, such as disclosing other Commissioners' stances to each other against the Sunshine law.

   The Manager advised he thought he had the authority to do what he did and he went to Staff. He would not have done it otherwise. He only did it due to the purpose of ensuring the City did not lost the promoter. He did what he did so he could bring it back to the Commission to decide. He advised he understands the Commission does not consider it an emergency, but there was not nefarious intent associated.

   Commissioner Campbell advised Mr. Bell lied through the whole process. He went to Staff, he made contact with additional Commissioners, he told him that Commissioner McCaskill was willing to call a meeting, and he advised he had contacted each of the Commissioners, while half of them say he did not.

   Motion to terminate Mr. Bell's employment (contract) immediately for violating policy and releasing City funds without authority (Commission's approval) by Mayor Correa. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. Motion passed 4-1, with Commissioner Jones dissenting.

   Commissioner Jones returned the gavel to Mayor Correa.

   Motion to have Ms. Carty as Interim City Manager until we have secured a City Manager by Commissioner Borom. Motion died for lack of a Second.

   Mayor Correa indicated she did not think it would be a good idea to nominate former Mayor Hill. Commissioner McCaskill spoke regarding the need for stability and spoke regarding need for stability and to move forward. Ms. West spoke regarding the need to have someone perhaps a current employee as Interim at least until the next meeting. Commissioner McCaskill advised another motion can be put on the floor to have someone internal serve as Interim until we determine if the former Mayor is willing. Commissioner Campbell expressed desire to have an Interim that is already here. Commissioner Jones expressed concern there is not a Staff member that is currently on Staff.

Commissioner Campbell advised in the past the Police Chief or the Chief Financial Officer have acted as Interim City Managers when the situation arose.

Motion to for a contract of 1-year for stability to bring in former Mayor Hill as Interim City Manager if he is willing by Commissioner Jones. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. Motion failed 3-2, with Commissioner Campbell, Commissioner Borom, Mayor Correa dissenting.

Commissioner Campbell advised the order of operations is the City Manager then the Chief Financial Officer.

Motion for Chief Financial Officer to serve as Interim City Manager until we find stability by Commissioner McCaskill. Seconded by Commissioner Borom. Ms. Carty accepted. **Motion Passed 3-2,** with Commissioners McCaskill and Jones dissenting.

Ms. Carty advised she previously served as Interim City Manager in the City of Quincy, Florida.

The Commission asked Ms. Carty to remove Mr. Bell's IT access and key card immediately.

a. DIRECTION - Jill Keiser, Financial Services Supervisor & Pension Administrator - employee grievance/ salary matter

Mrs. Jones spoke regarding the grievance process to date. In March, Ms. Keiser brought a concern to Ms. Carty. They could not reach a resolution. Ms. Keiser took the matter to the City Manager on April 10th, 26th, and May 1st. There was a contract in 2018 accepting a new pay rate with a 90-day review of the pay rate. Ms. Keiser was provided a pay increase. Ms. Keiser has been issued a retroactive payment going back to the time the City Manager was hired. Ms. Carty wanted to retro to the beginning of the fiscal year, and the City Manager did not feel comfortable doing that. The pay increase was from $26 to $42. Ms. Carty advised she did not agree to retroactive pay back to 2018 as it was brought to her attention in 2024.

Ms. West advised a grievance committee is to advise the Commission and to comprise of 3 to 5 members.

Ms. Keiser addressed the Commission. She advised she filed a grievance in March 2024. In 2018 the situation began, however she felt that the Salary Study was to correct the situation. The Salary Study came back with an increase of 2%. She disagreed that there was anyone to compare her job duties to, as she is the Pension Administrator for 3 local plans. When her pay rate did not get corrected at the conclusion of the salary study, she did not have any proof. The proof came in March 2024. In March, she indicated she was going to retire in October. She was told to remove the pension duties to be handled by an outside company. Int the past, each of the 3 plans paid $21,000 to the City so the pensions could have an administrator. When she deleted the bulk of those responsibilities, Human Resources posted the Finance Supervisor position at the same pay grade she held when she was performing the pension duties as well as the duties of Finance Supervisor. \

Ms. Keiser spoke of Human Resources (HR) being invited into the grievance meetings, although the policy does not say HR is to be involved. HR attempted to reach out to the company that did the salary study and found they are no longer in business. HR reviewed the salaries of those with similar positions as Finance Supervisor and based upon analysis advised the salary of the position without the pension duties is accurate. Ms. Keiser advised the Pension Plans have hired a company for $70,000 to perform her pension duties. Ms. Keiser advised it is the norm to retro pay back to when the salary mistake was made. She provided information that a past City Manager raised someone up three grades with no documentation.

Ms. Keiser advised she is asking for retroactive pay back to 2021 (the salary study) not 2018.

Mrs. Jones advised retroactive pay to the date of implementation of the salary study would be $18,770.26 (October 15, 2021).

Commissioner McCaskill and Mayor Correa spoke in support of the retroactive pay in the amount $18,770.26 less the $3,910.64 (Ms. Keiser has already received).

Commissioner Borom asked how many other employees may have this situation. Mr. Bell spoke of the need to do another salary study in the future. Commissioner Borom suggested having a timeframe to allow other employees to come forward with salary concerns. Ms. West recommended against the suggestion as to pursue this would open the door to potential complaints. Each grievance is different and the commission would apply it differently.

Motion to approve retroactive pay for Ms. Keiser back to October 15, 2021 by Commissioner McCaskill. Seconded by Commissioner Borom. The Motion Passed unanimously.

b. UPDATE/Discussion/Direction - regarding the execution of a retainer agreement with the firm Sniffen & Spellman, P.A. for investigative services

Commissioner McCaskill advised Sniffen & Spellman's fee was not to exceed $30,000 (before the probation time was over). After the probation period, they again said the amount would not to exceed $30,000. They will let us know in increments where they are in the process and a lot of the work has been cut down.

With the mediation process, she is asking Human Resources to provide a list of the pool of folks we selected a team builder from (and not use the one previously selected).

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

[Clerk's note: This item occurred prior to the new business item being added].

[Following item 9 above], discussion commenced regarding whether the Commission would continue the investigation into the practice into the City Manager.
The Consensus of the Commission was to defer to the next meeting.

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS
 - nothing further

11. ADJOURN **Motion to adjourn at 12:04 AM by Commissioner Borom. Seconded by Commissioner McCaskill. The Motion Passed unanimously.**