



**City of Freeport**

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

October 12, 2021, 9:00 AM  
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Councilman Eddie Farris, Councilman Tripp Hope, Councilman Mark Martin, Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner

Staff Members Present: City Manager Charlie Simmons, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Planning Director Latilda Neel, Finance Officer Sara Bowers, Parks Director Travis Digges, Sewer Supervisor Robert Fawcett, City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau, Utility Billing Manager Debbie Roberts

**1. Meeting Called to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Mayor Barley in the Council Chambers of Freeport City Hall.

**2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

The invocation was given by Councilman Farris, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**3. Recognition of Guests**

None.

**4. Consent Agenda**

a. Bills

(Tab 1)

b. Minutes – Regular Council Meeting September 23, 2021

(Tab 2)

c. Minutes Final Public Budget Hearing September 20, 2021

(Tab 3)

**5. Public Comment on Consent Agenda**

None.

**6. Approval of Consent Agenda**

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

*To approve the consent Agenda as presented.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

**7. Consideration of Additions/Deletions to Agenda**

Councilman Martin – Update on TPO

Mayor Russ Barley – Hiring of City Clerk

City Manager Simmons – Proposal by Jay Odom Group

City Manager Simmons – Appropriation Project State

**8. Approval of Agenda with Additions/Deletions**

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

*To approve the agenda with the specified additions as presented.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

9. **Staff Reports**

- a. Water
- b. Sewer
- c. Parks
- d. City Manager

1. Proposal by Jay Odom Group

City Manager Simmons invited Jay Odom to the podium. The Odom Group stated they are in the process of starting to develop a Single-Family Project on Hwy 3280 about three miles east of Black Creek. This project is within Walton County's planning jurisdiction and the City of Freeport's water and sewer area of service. This project will require 790 Water and Sewer ERU's from the city. The project includes 775 single family homes plus an Amenity Center with a clubhouse and pool. Odom has already completed the county's Land Use change process, with a completion of the first 200 lots anticipated around November 2023. The final planning and approval through the county and first phases of development infrastructure will take about two years.

Odom proposed to enter into a Water and Sewer Agreement with the city for these 790 ERU's. The total for the 790 capacity fees for water and sewer outside the city limits is currently: \$7,927,673.70. With approval, Odom is proposing the following: a 40% down payment of \$3,171,069.48 and the Developer agrees to design, permit, and install water line from Black Creek to the project. The Developer (Jay Odom Group) will front the cost of the water line design, permit and installation and receive credit for this cost to be deducted from the remaining 60%. One-third of this cost will be deducted from each 20% payment at months 24, 36, and 48. The proposal was thoroughly discussed. To note, City Attorney Adkinson, stated the city's engineers would have to determine if any upgrade in sizing would be needed for other developments with a nearby 200 acre parcel of land. Adkinson deemed that city Planner Neel would need to communicate with the County Planner to ensure the proper procedures would coincide between the county and city.

Moved by: Councilwoman Martin

Seconded by: Councilwoman Farris

*To accept proposal from Jay Odom Group for current capacity fees associated with the Single Family Project on Hwy 3280 about three miles from Black Creek estimated to be 790 ERU's reflecting 775 Single Family Homes plus an Amenity Center with a Club House and Pool subject to the following: staff determining the proper number of capacity fees, determining the anticipated cost of water line improvements from Black Creek to Faulkner Drive, determining the size line needed for this development (from Faulkner to this Development) and any upsizing the city needs, and awarding appropriate credits that are the city's responsibility not the Developer's, and for Planning to confirm with the county that their process for PUD mirrors the city's development stage for PDP. Assuming those contingencies are met, to use these current rates and for the final word to be brought back to the Council to confirm.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

2. Appropriations State Project

City Manager Simmons initially intended to bring this up again at the first council meeting in November, but the deadline for submission is November 15, 2021. City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau was invited up to discuss these projects. The first project Rouchaleau discussed was for the cost estimate of 83A West Water Line Improvements, about \$2.4 million, which would bring in a new water line all the way down 83A to help with the development activity and existing pressure issues. The second project includes CR 3280 East Water Line Improvements, estimated around \$865,000, which would improve existing water line pressure and support development activity. The third project would be the 83A Wastewater Improvements, including two lift stations to support the development seen in Hammock Bay and other areas, estimated about \$1.5 million. The fourth project is Lagrange Road Sewer Extension, part of the US 331 S Sewer Project, estimated around \$900,000, this project would pick up the proposed developments and existing septic systems. The fifth and final project to discuss is the Marquis Way Connector Road, estimated around \$8 million, for construction and engineering of a road and bridge. City Manager Simmons stated that the Marquis Way Project was the city's number one transportation project. This will be pursued with Liberty Partners and the county.

Moved by: Councilman Hope

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

*To approve moving forward with the discussion and action of these five projects.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

3. Event Discussion

City Manager Simmons announced on November 1st at 11:00am the ground-breaking of the 331 Sewer Project would commence. He stated that several important representatives would be present for the event because \$1 million from the House has turned into a total of \$18 million from the county and grants, exponentially increasing this project.

4. Discussions on a joint venture for combined Treatment Plant

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilman Hope

*To approve permission to start the discussion of a joint venture with the City of DeFuniak Springs on the Treatment Plant.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

e. City Clerk

f. Finance

g. Billing

h. Planning

i. Legal

j. Engineering

1. US 331 North Sewer Improvements- bid results and award recommendations (Tab 4)

- City Engineer Rouchaleau stated that four bids were received for this project. The low bid came from North Florida Construction at \$5,139,806.00. All bid documents were reviewed and approved.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

*To approve the bid received from North Florida Construction for the US 331 North Sewer Improvement Project, pending legal documentation.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

**10. Old Business**

a. Water and Sewer Capacity Fee and Rate Study Discussion (Tab 5)

City Manager Simmons briefed the Council on the history of capacity fees. Up to 2019, it had been fifteen years since any changes had been made to water or sewer fees. The price increased from \$750 to \$1,094 when capacity fees were proposed. Outside the city limits services were \$1,912 and decreased to \$1,307 because for the \$600 difference was not warranted.

The Original Proposed Rates and Updated Proposed Rates were presented. City Engineer Rouchaleau stated all the rates were based on numbers from the study. Councilwoman Haffner stated the Updated Rates Proposal will prevent the city from losing \$400 with each meter installed from the water capacity. Therefore, these Updated Rates are required for the city to move forward.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilman Hope

*To approve the Updated Proposed Rates of the Water and Sewer Capacity Fees and Rates.*

City Attorney Adkinson proposed an Amended Motion. Finance Officer Bowers proposed the allocation of capacity funds received would be a 50/50 split of the water capacity fees between its primary operating account and a reserve account for future growth of the water system. The allocation of the wastewater capacity feeds received would be maintained with 25% going to its operating account and the remaining 75% being placed in a reserve account for future growth of the wastewater system.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilman Hope

*To adopt a Resolution of the Rates and an Ordinance of the Capacity Fees within the near future with adaptations proposed by Finance Officer Bowers.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

**11. New Business**

a. Mayor Russ Barley

1. Hiring of City Clerk

Mayor Barley informed the Council that there were over 50 applicants for the City Clerk position. After review by himself, Finance Officer Bowers, and City Manager Simmons they selected the best applicant. Kathie Gatewood was the chosen applicant, and with her previous experience Mayor Barley requested her pay to be set at \$47,500. Councilwoman Haffner and Councilwoman Brannon emphasized that after interviewing Gatewood, she would be an excellent fit for the position.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon  
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

*To approve the hiring of Kathie Gatewood as City of Freeport's new City Clerk.*

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Hope: aye  
Councilwoman Haffner: aye  
Councilman Martin: aye  
Councilman Farris: aye  
Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Carried

b. Councilwoman Brannon

c. Councilman Farris

d. Councilwoman Haffner

e. Councilman Hope

f. Councilman Martin

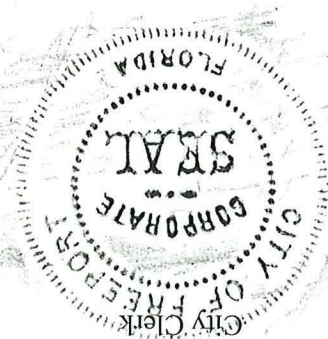
1. Update on TPO

Councilman Martin informed the Council that he recently attended the TPO meeting of Walton/Okaloosa Counties. He stated the proceedings of meeting that took place with one man from DOT and several representatives from Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Councilman Martin also discussed the Emerald Coast Transportation Symposium scheduled for November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>.

**12. Public Comment**

**13. Adjournment**

Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 10:33 AM.



*Thomas G. Gattwood*

ATTEST:

Mayor

*Tom Gattwood*