



City of Freeport

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

September 13, 2022, 9:00 AM
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilman Eddie Farris, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Councilman Bud Day, Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner and Councilman Tripp Hope

Staff Members Present: City Attorney Clay Adkinson, City Manager Mark Martin, City Clerk Kathie Gatewood, Finance Officer Sara Bowers, Wastewater Supervisor Robert Fawcett, Water Supervisor Larry Tuggle, Parks & Recreation Director Travis Digges, Billing Supervisor Lourdes Johnson, and City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau

1. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. 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

Mayor Barley thanked Walton County Commissioner Boots McCormick for attending the meeting.

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Bills
- b. Budget Workshop Minutes – August 25, 2022
- c. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – August 25, 2022
- d. First Public Budget Hearing Minutes – September 8, 2022
- e. Liberty Partners Contract Approval
- f. A to Z Lock & Safe Alarm System Estimate for City Hall

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5. Public Comment on Consent Agenda

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

6. Approval of Consent Agenda

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

To approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

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

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

Carried.

7. Consideration of Additions/Deletions to Agenda

There were no additions, changes, or deletions made.

8. Approval of Agenda as presented

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To approve the agenda as presented.

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

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

Carried.

9. Staff Reports

a. Water

b. Sewer

(Continued on the next page)

c. Parks

1. MADD 5K Event

Parks Director Digges let the Council know there will be a special event at the Regional Sports Complex on September 18, 2022, in the Hammock Bay Green Area. He said there would be a ten-minute road closure in the early morning.

d. City Manager

1. WildStar Networks

City Manager Martin said this discussion was a continuation from a previous meeting. He let the Council know a representative from WildStar Networks was present. WildStar Networks representative Henry Martin summarized his role in the county to date and with his current employment with WildStar. He said there was a realization that there was a need for wireless broadband.

Walton County Media Manager Jason Cook spoke to the Council and summarized the need and process of obtaining wireless broadband for this project. He said this project was started before COVID-19 but that during the pandemic it was better understood how much it was needed. He let the Council know that WildStar has entered into an agreement with the City of Paxton and Defuniak Springs. He said the reason they desire to use the water towers is because it is cheaper than any other location. Councilman Hope asked if there were any health concerns to be wary of, to which Mr. Cook said no, that it wasn't 5G technology.

Councilwoman Haffner recalled that when the matter was first brought up that the Council allowed all of the water towers to be used except for the one with all of the city's equipment on it. She said the Water Supervisor did not want the technology on that water tower out of concern for interference which she respected. She did not understand why there was such a large coverage gap and she could not support adding the last water tower if staff has safety concerns.

Councilman Farris said he was aware that the City Manager, City Attorney and the Water Supervisor had worked out an agreement for contacting staff before having access. He said he thinks this is a good thing for the city, that it is a pilot program and may not last, but he supported it. He made the motion to approve.

Councilwoman Brannon stated that she is a real estate agent and understands the need for better internet in the county. She thanked Walton County and WildStar for offering the program. She recalled at the previous meeting that she conceded to the agreement for the four water towers although she never wanted anything on any of the towers. She said for this water tower that she could not support the motion.

Councilman Hope said with situations like COVID-19 and school violence there

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are more and more kids attending virtual school and it is an issue with limited internet access. Councilwoman Haffner said the gap exists where people already have access to Internet from other providers.

Henry Martin explained that there is no interference, and the frequency is the same one used by emergency services. He said WildStar is willing to add to the contract that if there is interference, they will remove the technology.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Hope

Mayor Barley called for public comment there was none.

To include Well 3, Tank 1 in the WildStar Networks contract.

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

Councilman Farris:	aye
Councilwoman Brannon:	nay
Councilwoman Haffner:	nay
Councilman Hope:	aye
Councilman Day	aye

The motion passed 3-2.

2. City Redistricting Map Guidance Discussion

City Manager Martin told the Council under tab were the proposed redistricting maps. City Attorney Adkinson said if the Council has had a chance to review the maps and wants to move forward that he recommends having a special meeting to discuss it further. He said the meeting would be attended by Supervisor of Elections Bobby Beasley and incoming Supervisor of Elections Ryan Messer for a question-and-answer session. City Attorney Adkinson asks the Council to coordinate with him for special meeting dates and times.

3. City Website & Office Phones Guidance Discussion

City Manager Martin reminded the Council of the past website issues and let them know that he has been exploring different companies. He said it would take time to change to a new website and there would be a cost as well. He said City Clerk Gatewood has dealt with the preferred company in the past and it was head and shoulders above the other companies. He asked if the Council would like him to keep exploring, to which Councilman Hope said yes and the other Council Members agreed.

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City Manager Martin discussed the difficulties with the city desk phones, to which City Clerk Gatewood agreed. He reminded the Council that RingCentral was previously discussed in a meeting. He asked the Council if they would like him to keep exploring RingCentral which they agreed.

4. Human Resources Position

City Manager Martin directed the Council to the package entry for the Human Resources position. Councilwoman Haffner asked for details of the position and pay, which was between \$45,000-\$65,000 per year. City Clerk Gatewood asked if the position was exempt or not, to which City Attorney Adkinson replied exempt.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Mayor Barley called for public comment there was none.

To approve the posting of the Human Resources Generalist position on October 1, 2022.

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

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

Carried.

e. City Clerk

1. Regular Council Meeting Dates for November and December

City Clerk Gatewood reminded the Council of their last discussion to possibly move the November and December Regular Council Meeting dates to the Freeport Board Room 842 State Highway 20 East, Freeport, FL 32439. She said she was able to reserve the room for both dates and times. She asked for a motion to formally move the meetings.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

Mayor Barley called for public comment there was none.

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To approve moving the November 8, 2022 at 9am and December 13, 2022 at 9am regular council meetings to the Freeport Board Room at 842 State Highway 20 East, Freeport FL 32439

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

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

Carried.

- f. Finance
- g. Billing
- h. Planning

1. Oakfield Estates Replat

Planning Director Hughes-Neel asked for a motion to approve the Oakfield Estates Replat map as presented.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Hope

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve the Oakfield Estates Replat map as presented.

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

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

Carried.

2. RLJ Irrevocable Trust Abandonment Request

Planning Director Hughes-Neel summarized the request and asked the Council for a motion to approve the resolution.

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Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Mayor Barley called for public comment.

Debra Jenkins, Hazelwood Apartments Property Manager (Southeastern Management) asked how this would affect their property, to which Planning Director said it would not and she would be happy to speak with her in more detail after the meeting.

To approve the RLJ Irrevocable Trust Abandonment Resolution 2022-06 as presented.

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

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

Carried.

3. LDC Revision to Appendix D Technical Standard Manuel

Planning Director Hughes-Neel summarized the document and asked the Council for a motion to approve the ordinance.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Hope

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve Ordinance 2022-10 LDC Revision to Appendix D Technical Manual

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

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

Carried.

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Planning Director Hughes-Neel read the ordinance into record:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE FREEPORT LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; REVISIONS APPENDIX D; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE, CONFLICT SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

i. Legal

1. Amended American Metal Bearing Company (AMB) Direction

City Attorney Adkinson reminded the Council that they had given the City Manager authority to negotiate with American Metal Bearing (AMB) regarding land that would be provided to them at low or no cost in exchange for meeting certain economic criteria, for a specific amount of jobs and certain wages. He said the land would be in the roughly eight-five acres that the city purchased for a new sewer treatment plant. He explained that the city planned to carve off up to ten acres for the American Metal Bearing negotiations. He noted that after numerous discussions that some things have changed. He expressed that alert the Council to the changes is not to suggest that anyone at American Metal Bearing or otherwise has not fulfilled, but that the method of how they wish to construct their building as taken a different path. He told the Council that in his talks with Space Florida, which included former City Manager Charlie Simmons and current City Manager Martin, along with Liberty Partners and AMB, have changed so that AMB would be working out a deal with Space Florida to privately fund the start of construction and then Space Florida would take out the debt service in exchange for their economic development in this area; to do that however, the property is not directly conveyed to AMB, it would be leased from the city to Space Florida. At the end of the lease, AMB could ask the city deeding the property to them for a nominal sum. He said the city is considering a lease between fifteen and thirty years, but it looks like fifteen and twenty is about the range it will come to. He said this scenario is quite different than what the Council approved. He expressed that he believed this was a safer option for the city and wanted to be sure with the Council that they were okay with this direction. He requested the Council to do two things. One, to rescind their prior of conveying the property to AMB at low or no cost for job performance being met. And two, issue a new offer with Space Florida for a lease on the same property providing that certain job performance metrics consistent with what we previously discussed between twenty-five and thirty-five job with an average wage of around ninety thousand dollars a year be met. He said the final documents would be negotiated and brought back to the Council.

Former City Manager Charlie Simmons told the Council agreed with City Attorney Adkinson that the city is in a better position to negotiate with Space Florida than AMB. He said the City of Freeport has done all that they can and it is time to draw a line in the sand to start getting the negotiations moving forward. City Attorney Adkinson said that Space Florida has relayed to the city that even if the project does

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not move forward with AMB that they are happy to look at other contractors for the area.

Moved by: Councilman Hope

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To rescind the prior offer concerning American Metal Bearing (AMB) and to enter into a new offer with Space Florida for a lease agreement and that the city does not pursue any funding until there is a dual binding agreement.

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

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

Carried.

Councilwoman Brannon asked that the motion include the word dual for the binding agreement and Councilmen Hope and Farris agreed to amend their motion.

j. Engineering

10. Old Business

11. New Business

a. Mayor Barley

1. Employee of the Quarter

Mayor Barley presented Wastewater employee Stacy Ward with the Employee of the Quarter award certificate and gift card then thanked her for all her hard work.

b. Councilwoman Brannon

c. Councilman Farris

d. Councilwoman Haffner

e. Councilman Hope

f. Councilman Day

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12. Public Comment

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

13. Adjournment

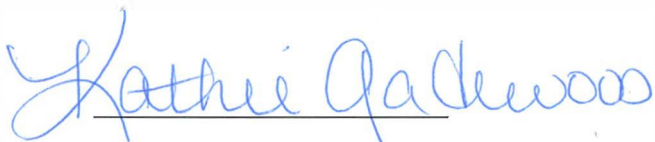
Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 10:07 a.m.

Minutes were prepared by City Clerk Gatewood and approved by the City Council on November 8, 2022.



Russ Barley, Mayor

ATTEST:



Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk

