



## City of Freeport

### REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 24, 2022, 6:30 PM  
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

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

Staff Members Present: City Manager Charlie Simmons, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Planning Director Latilda Neel, Planning Technician Samantha Graves, Finance Officer Sara Bowers, City Clerk Kathie Gatewood, Billing Supervisor Lourdes Johnson, Sewer Supervisor Robert Fawcett, Wastewater Treatment Supervisor Paul Johnson, Parks & Recreation Director Travis Digges and City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau.

#### 1. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.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 welcomed Tony Vallee, City of Defuniak Springs Councilman to the meeting.

#### 4. Consent Agenda

a. Bills

b. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2022

#### 5. Public Comment on Consent Agenda

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Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

**6. Approval of Consent Agenda**

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

*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 Martin:    | aye |
| Councilman Hope       | aye |

Carried.

Councilwoman Brannon commended City Clerk Gatewood for the minutes presented.

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

1. City Manager – Ratifying billing department disconnection delay and removal of late fees.

2. City Engineer – Resolutions for Small City Outreach Program (SCOP).

3. Councilman Martin – Legislative Update.

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

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

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

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

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

Carried.

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**9. Staff Reports**

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

1. City Manager Simmons asked the Council for approval for Joint Transportation Meeting with the cities of Defuniak Springs, Paxton, Freeport, and Walton County on March 1, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. at the Defuniak Springs Community Center.

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

Moved by: Councilman Farris  
Seconded by: Councilman Hope

*To give the City Manager approval for Joint Transportation Meeting with the cities of Defuniak Springs, Paxton, Freeport, and Walton County on March 1, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.*

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

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

Carried.

**2. Ratifying Billing Department Disconnect Delay and Removal of Late Fees**

City Manager Simmons explained to the Council there was a mail delay for residents receiving their utility billing statement in February. He further explained that the city is experiencing a delay in receiving mailed payments as well. He said staff is working with the Freeport Postmaster to avoid any future issues. The Mayor commended Billing Supervisor Johnson for all of the hard work her and her staff have put in to take care of this situation noting many hours were spent calling hundreds of customers and manually removing nearly one thousand late fees from the billing system. City Manager Simmons and the Council also thanked Billing Supervisor Johnson.

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

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Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon  
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

*To ratify the Billing Department disconnect delay and remove all late fees for February 2022.*

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

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

Carried.

e. City Clerk

1. Community Newsletter Proposal

City Clerk Gatewood presented the Council with a memo outlining the uses for the proposed monthly newsletter, explaining it would be published in digital and paper form for the public. She noted the Mayor, Councilmembers, the City Manager and Department Heads could contribute content each month and this would be a good opportunity for more communication with the residents. The newsletter would be created by the City Clerk and the Clerk's Office Student Intern. City Manager Simmons thanked the City Clerk for creating the program.

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

Moved by: Councilman Hope  
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

*To approve a monthly newsletter to be published by the City Clerk's office.*

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

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

Carried.

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

1. Orange Data Systems- Approval to utilize free on-line lien search platform

Planning Director Hughes-Neel detailed the lien search process to the Council making them aware of the amount of time staff spends performing the lien searches and time spent answering continuous inquiries. She explained the ease of the proposed platform to streamline lien searches to free up staff time. City Manager Simmons asked how much the service would cost, to which the Planning Director said of the fee collected, a portion would be given to the city and the rest to the company. She directed the Council to look at the agreement example in the meeting package. She asked the Council for approval to allow the City Manager to execute the agreement to move forward with using the service. City Attorney Adkinson recommended changes to sections 9 and 14 of the agreement. The last line of Section 9 would change by adding “Nothing herein shall be deemed to waive the City’s right to sovereign immunity.” to the last section. Section 14 would change by changing the word Sarasota to Walton.

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

*To approve the Planning Department agreement with Orange Data Systems, a free on-line lien search platform as amended by the City Attorney.*

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

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

Carried.

2. Planning Director Hughes-Neel updated the Council telling them her department has been cross-training employees to ensure the same level of service in case of any staffing that may arise. She said their newly hired Planning Intern Summer Ammirata-Hall has been doing a fantastic job. She also told the

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Council Samantha Graves; Planning Technician has been shadowing her work to learn more about her role.

i. Legal

1. Wright. Annexation Ordinance – Second Reading

City Attorney Adkinson asked the Council for a motion to hold second reading of the Wright Annexation Ordinance.

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

Moved by: Councilman Hope

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

*To approve second reading of the Wright Annexation Ordinance – 2022-04*

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

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

Carried.

City Attorney Adkinson held second reading:

**AN ORDINANCE ANNEXING TO THE TERRITORIAL LIMITS OF THE CITY OF FREEPORT, FLORIDA, CERTAIN PROPERTY AND REDEFINING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CITY FREEPORT, FLORIDA, SO AS TO INCLUDE THEREIN THE PROPERTY ANNEXED HEREIN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VOLUNTARY ANNEXATION PROVISIONS OF FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 171.044, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

j. Engineering

1. City Engineer Rouchaleau presented the Council with two resolutions for Municipal Small County Outreach Program funding to improve two areas of the city: 83A East and SR-20 and Four Mile Road (bridge not included).

City Engineer Rouchaleau asked the Council for a motion to approve the two resolutions.

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Mayor Barley called for public comment on either resolution and there was none.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

*To approve the 83A East and SR-20 Municipal Small County Outreach Program  
Resolution – 2022-02*

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

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

Carried.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

*To approve the Four Mile Road Municipal Small County Outreach Program  
Resolution – 2022-03*

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

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

Carried.

**10. Old Business**

**11. New Business**

- a. Mayor Russ Barley
- b. Councilwoman Brannon
- c. Councilman Farris
- d. Councilwoman Haffner
- e. Councilman Hope
- f. Councilman Martin

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1. Councilman Martin gave the Council a Legislative Update noting he and City Manager Simmons attended various meetings with Representatives and Senators as well as attending a Northwest Florida Days Legislative Appreciation Breakfast. He commended City Manager Simmons on the positive relationships he has built with our state government politicians to ensure that Freeport is well-represented. He also commended Freeport's lobbyists Liberty Partners for all of their hard work in Tallahassee on behalf of Freeport and said the monies the city pays them is well-spent.

**12. Public Comment**

Mayor Barley called for public comment.

David Puckett, a Verandas homeowner and HOA president, approached the Council to thank them for listening to the people about previous parking issues that have now been resolved. Councilwoman Haffner showed her appreciation of Mr. Puckett coming to the meetings and offering his support.

**13. Adjournment**

Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

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



Russ Barley, Mayor

ATTEST:



Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk

