



CITY OF FREEPORT
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

March 23, 2023, 6:30 PM
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Councilman Bud Day, Councilman Tracey Dickey, Councilman Eddie Farris, and Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner.

Staff Members Present: City Attorney Clay Adkinson, City Manager Mark Martin, City Clerk Kathie Gatewood, Finance Officer Sara Bowers, Planning Director Latilda Hughes-Neel, Senior Planner Samantha Graves, Parks Director Travis Digges, Wastewater Supervisor Paul Johnson, City Engineers Alex Rouchaleau and Cliff Knauer, Water Supervisor Larry Tuggle, HR Generalist Chris Quinley, and Billing Supervisor Rebecca King

City Clerk's Note: Items were not presented in the same order as the agenda.

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

Councilman Farris gave the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was recited.

3. Recognition of Guests

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Bills
- b. Workshop Meeting Minutes – March 9, 2023
- c. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – March 14, 2023
- d. Revenue & Expense Reports Through February 2023

5. Public Comment on Consent Agenda

City Clerk Gatewood told the Council that Planning Director Hughes-Neel brought to her attention to her comments near the end of the March 9, 2023 Workshop for the New Community Center and asked that they be included. City Clerk Gatewood agreed with her and presented the Council with an addition to the minutes and asked for a motion to approve the minutes with the additional language.

6. Approval of Consent Agenda

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Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve the consent agenda to include the additional approved language for the March 9, 2023 New Community Center Workshop Minutes.

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

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

Carried.

7. Consideration of Additions/Deletions to Agenda

1. Planning Director – Deletion – The Crossroads PDP
2. Planning Director – Addition – Update on Senate Bill 102 for Housing
3. Councilman Farris – Addition – Freeport Elementary School
4. City Manager – Addition – Engineering RFQ

8. Approval of Agenda with Additions

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Day

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve the agenda additions presented.

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

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

Carried.

9. Staff Reports

- a. Water
- b. Sewer
- c. Parks

1. Barrier Free Park paving

Parks Director Digges reported that no bids were received for the second time for the Marse Landing and Barrier Free Park Parking Lot Expansion RFQ. He sought guidance and asked if he were able to gather up to three estimates for the Barrier Free Park portion, could he bring them back to the Council for consideration. Councilwoman Haffner questioned if the difficulty in receiving bids was due to the small size of the project, to which Parks Director Digges replied yes. Mayor Barley informed the Council that an extension was made for the project and Parks Director Digges responded that the cutoff was April 30, 2023. Councilman Farris asked City Attorney Adkinson if what was proposed would be okay, to which Mr. Adkinson replied based on the extraordinary circumstances, yes.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment.

Councilwoman Haffner queried the Parks Director if the city could ask the county for help, and he said yes.

To authorize Parks Director Digges to seek up to three vendor quotes for the Barrier Free Park paving project.

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

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

Carried.

d. City Manager

1. North Walton Mosquito Control

City Manager Martin informed the Council that Walton County wanted an answer regarding participation in the North Walton Mosquito Control program. Councilwoman Haffner said she was not comfortable with the

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millage rate because the higher the property values the higher a property owner pays for mosquito control and that is unfair. Councilman Farris said he has spoken with Walton County staff and many residents and expressed that something must be done. He emphasized that Walton County will not change anything just for Freeport and reminded the other Councilmembers the county reviews the millage rate on a regular basis. Councilwoman Brannon acknowledged that something needs to be done but that this is not a fair tax. She reiterated that this was an unfair tax and strongly communicated that she would always be a no vote for an unfair tax on her constituents and if the county puts this in place it will be without her support. Councilwoman Haffner said she spoke with Scott Caraway with the county and if amount the were calculated by rooftop instead of property values, that amount would give the county over \$300,000.00 which was their goal. She agreed with Councilwoman Brannon that this was an unfair tax. Councilman Farris said no one on the Council is for raising taxes but the city needs mosquito control. He reminded everyone that creating a department for mosquito control would be too costly.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilman Day

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve the North Walton Mosquito Control Service for 0.49 millage rate with a stipulation that the Walton County Commissioner cannot go over the 0.49 millage rate without coming before the Freeport City Council.

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

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

Carried 3-2.

2. Engineering RFQ

City Attorney Adkinson reminded the Council at their last meeting they approved staff to create a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for continuing engineering services. He explained that while the RFQ was being created, City Manager Martin met with Dewberry Engineering about future plans to increase staff and higher level of services. He said there were three options for the Council to consider for approval at this time:

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1. Approve the RFQ as presented and publish.
2. Reject and do not publish the RFQ.
3. Approve the RFQ to publish but do not require Dewberry to submit for the RFQ because their contract is still in full force.

Councilwoman Haffner said she already voted for the RFQ and wanted to go ahead and publish it.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve publishing the Engineering Continuing Services Request for Qualifications with an exemption for submittal by Dewberry Engineering.

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

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

Carried.

e. City Clerk

f. Finance

g. Billing

1. Delinquent Account Procedures

Billing Supervisor King asked for a motion to change the current Delinquent Account Procedures Policy to allow accounts to be sent to collections after 60 days.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve updating the Delinquent Account Procedures to allow delinquent accounts to be sent to collections after 60 days.

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

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

Carried.

Billing Supervisor King informed the Council that the approved collection agency for delinquent accounts is no longer in business. After reaching out to several collection agencies, she only received two quotes, which she presented to the Council. After a brief discussion, City Attorney Adkinson advised to select an agenda with a comparable rate to what the city previously had. Councilwoman Haffner questioned if the Council could vote on the matter due to this subject not being on the agenda. City Attorney Adkinson said the matter would be added to the next regular meeting in the consent agenda.

h. Planning

1. Planning Director Hughes-Neel provided the Council with an update on Senate Bill 102 related the affordable housing and predicted the bill would become law. She summarized the bill but emphasized the bill would preempt any local government requirement surrounding zoning, density, and height to allow for streamlined development. This bill removes local government's ability to approve affordable housing on residential parcels. She indicated that the land development code would need to be updated if the bill became law in July 2023.

Councilwoman Haffner asked if a property were zoned as commercial or mixed use, would the owner be able to build affordable housing if they wanted on it even if it is not zoned correctly, to which Planning Director Hughes-Neel and City Attorney Adkinson replied yes.

i. Legal

j. Engineering

1. Change Order #3 / Engineering Agreement Amendment #2 - 1.5 MGD WWTF Expansion

City Engineer Knauer handed out an information package to the Council. He provided an overview of the package and asked if there were any questions. Philip Jones of Dewberry and Mark Hickinbotham of Sawcross, Inc. were available to answer questions. He let the Council know there are monthly meetings with USDA, DEP, the Contractors, Inspectors, and other staff. He said on a given day there are 30-60 people working onsite.

He explained the challenges of availability of materials and outlined how employees worked around the challenge to remain efficient.

The change order presented is asking for 310 extra days for substantial completion and 370 days until the final. Councilwoman Haffner asked about the completion date, to which City Engineer Knauer replied that the projected completion date is somewhere around March 2024. Councilwoman Haffner asked for an update for the generator, to which she was told June is still the project delivery date.

Philip Jones of Dewberry Engineering gave the Council an update on capacity. Councilwoman Haffner asked when the plant would be at 0.9 and Mr. Jones said September.

City Engineer Knauer told the Council the monies for this change order would come entirely from grant money for the project.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilman Day

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve the 1.5 MGD WWTF Expansion Change Order #3 subject to USDA approval.

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

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

Carried.

City Engineer Knauer asked the Council for a motion to approve the proposed Engineering Agreement Amendment #2 for the 1.5 MGD WWTF Expansion in the amount of \$214,680.00. He provided an overview of the changes requested and noted the monies for this change would also be funded entirely with grant money. Finance Officer Bowers asked that the motion state the approval was subject to USDA approval.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve the Engineering Agreement Amendment #2 subject to USDA approval.

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

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

Carried.

10. Agenda Addition Request

Crystal Harrison of the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care gave the Council a presentation of her organization and the importance of supporting their cause. Mayor Barley and the Council thanked her for attending.

11. Old Business

12. New Business

- a. Mayor Barley
- b. Councilwoman Brannon
- c. Councilman Farris

1. Freeport Elementary School Mural

Councilman Farris presented a drawing and briefed the Council on a project the gifted children at Freeport Elementary School wanted to put together. He described a wall mural they wanted to create in the school with the phrase, "Anchor Here, Grow Here" included. He said Mrs. Lewis, the gifted program teacher, approached him and wanted to have Council approval. He spoke with City Attorney Adkinson who stated it was not a commercial event and he did not see an issue with it. Mayor Barley asked if a motion was needed, to which City Attorney Adkinson said to go ahead and formalize the approval.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Day

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment and there was none.

To approve Freeport Elementary School to use "Anchor Here, Grow Here" on a school wall mural.

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

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

Carried.

- d. Councilwoman Haffner
- e. Councilman Dickey
- f. Councilman Day

12. Public Comment

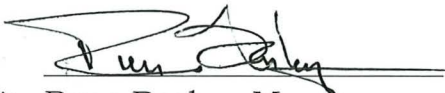
Mayor Barley called for public comment.

Kristine Bacon asked if the Affordable Housing was still being based on all of Walton County, so the income is based on \$80,000.00, to which Planning Director Hughes-Neel replied that it is based on the average median income and the rule is set by Florida Statute. Councilwoman Haffner said she believed it was \$78,000.00.

13. Adjournment

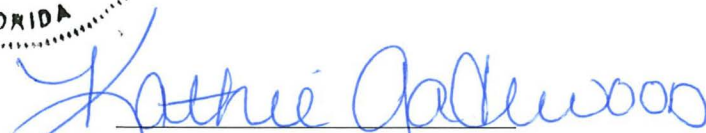
With no other business, Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn at 7:27 p.m.

Minutes were prepared by City Clerk Gatewood and approved by the City Council on April 27, 2023.


Russ Barley, Mayor

ATTEST:




Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk