



CITY OF FREEPORT
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

April 27, 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 6:31 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

Mayor Barley welcomed area pageant winners to the meeting. The newly crowned Miss Freeports, Miss Defuniak Springs, and Miss Walton County pageants introduced themselves to the Council.

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Bills
- b. Revenue & Expense Reports Through March 2023
- c. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – March 23, 2023
- d. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – April 11, 2023

5. Public Comment on Consent Agenda

Mayor Barley called for public comment on the consent agenda and there was none.

6. Approval of Consent Agenda

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

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

To approve the consent agenda as presented.

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

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

Carried.

7. Consideration of Additions/Deletions/Changes to Agenda

1. City Manager – Addition - Water Department Employee

8. Approval of Agenda with Additions

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

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 Day:	aye
Councilman Farris:	aye
Councilman Brannon:	aye
Councilman Dickey:	aye

Carried.

9. Staff Reports

a. Water

b. Sewer

c. Parks

1. Regional Sports Complex Updates

Parks Director Digges provided the following updates:

Barrier-Free Park – He said the park is progressing well and asphalt will be installed hopefully next week.

Lightning Strike in the Regional Sports Complex - He outlined the events surrounding the event and detailed damage known to date.

Sports Complex Splashpad – reopening for the season on Monday, May 1.

Co-Ed Softball – everything is going very well.

2. Purchase of a Vehicle

Parks Director Digges summarized the history of the difficulties trying to purchase a vehicle for parks in the last two years. He stated Triangle Chevrolet found a truck that meets park needs; however, it is overbudget by \$1,050.00. Councilwoman Haffner asked when the truck would be available, to which he replied somewhere around the end of June. He asked for a motion to approve the truck purchase. Finance Officer Bowers confirmed the money was available in the budget.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment.

To authorize the purchase of a vehicle for \$46,050.00

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

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

Carried.

d. City Manager

1. Water Department Employee Addition

Finance Officer Bowers explained that while interviewing candidates for a Water Department position, they encountered two very good candidates, but only had one opening. She said there is money in the budget, and staff would like to hire both. She said there is a need for another Water Department employee and asked for a motion to approve the addition. Councilwoman Haffner commented that as the city grows, they will need more employees, and was in favor of the addition.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

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

To approve the addition of a Water Maintenance I position.

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

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

Carried.

2. City Records Storage

City Manager Martin presented the Council with the research results for records storage, stating staff recommend using the Old City Hall option.

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 use of Old City Hall to be converted into a records storage area as presented.

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

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

Carried.

City Clerk Gatewood thanked the Council.

3. Tutu Trot Run Special Event Permit

City Manager Martin explained a special event permit was received that included closing roads. The organizer of the event, Maritza Rosado, provided the Council with a map of the route, and explained the event details. Justin Powell, Walton County Emergency Management Logistics Coordinator, gave details about road closures. Park Director Digges explained that baseball and soccer day are on the same day, and more advanced notice would be helpful next year.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

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

To approve the Tutu Trot Run Special Event Permit as presented.

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

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

Carried.

4. Business 331 Sidewalk Update

City Manager Martin summarized the project. He said on a recent call with Walton County and Florida Department of Transportation, along with City Engineer Knauer that they learned because the project is in phases, and FDOT only wanted to move forward with phase I, that FDOT would return approximately six-hundred thousand dollars of the project funds for two of the phases back to FDOT. He said the estimated bid for phase I was believed to be three-hundred-fifty thousand dollars. He questioned the amount returned saying it appeared the city would need to reapply for the six-hundred thousand dollars for two of the three project phases since it was being removed, to which he was told was correct.

In addition, during the meeting, a problem was revealed with the sewer lines. City Engineer Knauer came up with a simple solution and created plans overnight that he sent the next day and was told by Walton County that it was too late. City Attorney Adkinson asked Mr. Knauer some clarifying questions. Councilman Farris expressed deep frustration, exclaiming that he has worked on this project for years trying to make this a reality. He asked who was at fault, because his passion is the safety of the people, which includes kids, in Freeport who walk up and down that particular highway. Councilwoman Brannon agreed with Councilman Farris and asked if someone could contact the parties and find out what can be done, to which City Attorney Adkinson said his understanding was that it was too late as of the phone call and the city was brought in at the end of everything.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Mayor Barley called for further Council discussion and public comment.

Councilwoman Haffner expressed irritation with how long this process has taken, only to be possibly starting over. Planning Director Hughes-Neel

said the city applied for the grant in 2018. She said Councilman Farris worked very hard on this project and it was not easy for them to give forty-five thousand dollars towards the project. She let the Council know that Walton County was involved because they are LAP Certified, which is required to apply for the grant while the city is not. She suggested the city become LAP Certified, which she said is not difficult, so the city can not only submit these projects but also administer the grants. She said this would give the city more control over the process and eliminate the middleman. The Council agreed and an outline of the plans to become LAP Certified will be presented at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

To approve City Manager Martin to contact Walton County and Florida Department of Transportation to ask for an opportunity to revisit the sidewalk plan for this year's funding; if unsuccessful, ask to reapply next year using the City Engineer, their plans, and the City lobbyist as part of the negotiating process as a courtesy.

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

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

Carried.

e. City Clerk

1. FACC Summer Academy

City Clerk Gatewood asked for a motion to allow her to attend the FACC Summer Academy June 17-21, 2023 in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

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

To approve City Clerk Gatewood to attend the FACC Summer Academy June 17-21, 2023.

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

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

Carried.

2. Untimely Disposal of Records

City Clerk Gatewood advised she consulted with Florida Department of State on the protocol for unrecoverable records and asked for a motion to deem approximately ten mixed-size boxes of records unrecoverable. Councilwoman Haffner asked City Clerk Gatewood if these were unsalvageable, to which she confirmed. City Attorney Adkinson said the records are not being disposed of prematurely, that they are well beyond their retention dates.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

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

To adopt the City Clerk's recommendation for unrecoverable records as stated on the presented memorandum of April 27, 2023.

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

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

Carried.

f. Finance

g. Billing

h. Planning

1. Corporate Woods Major Development Application

Planning Director Hughes-Neel described the project as mixed use, zoned as residential commercial with 22,286 square feet of professional office space on 2.34 acres. She said the project is on S.R. 20 just west of city hall and there are no requested conditions. She said although the project meets all the standards, she is asking the developer to convert two regular parking spots into two additional handicapped spots. She said staff is recommending approval of the project as presented. Jamie Eubanks from Jenkins Engineering provided project details asked the Council if they had any questions or concerns to address, to which they said no. He said converting the parking spots into additional handicapped spots was no problem.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

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

To approve the Corporate Woods Major Development Application as presented.

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

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

Carried.

2. Splendor at Hammock Bay Final Plat

Planning Director Hughes-Neel summarized the information for the 16-lot area in Hammock Bay and asked the Council for a motion to approve the final plat as presented.

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 Splendor at Hammock Bay Final Plat as presented.

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

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

Carried.

3. Wildflower at Hammock Bay Final Plat

Planning Director Hughes-Neel summarized the information for the 23-lot area in Hammock Bay and asked the Council for a motion to approve the final plat as presented.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

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

To approve the Wildflower at Hammock Bay Final Plat as presented.

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

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

Carried.

i. Legal

j. Engineering

1. Proposal for Geotechnical Work

City Engineer Knauer advised the Council a geotechnical work study was needed to make a final decision on a U.S. 331 piece of land for a RIB Site and asked for a motion to approve the proposal as presented.

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 Geotechnical Work Study as presented for a potential U.S. 331 RIB Site to be paid for with capacity fees.

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

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

Carried.

2. Four Mile Road Bridge Pipe Emergency

City Engineer Knauer explained that while work was being performed on a right-of-way, it was discovered that strap for a force main was broken (without leaking) and needed an emergency repair that City Manager Martin already approved. No action was required by the Council.

3. Boating Program Grant Update - unscheduled meeting addition

City Engineer Knauer provided the Council with an update on the boating grant to remove submerged vessels. He asked for a motion to approve Councilman Dickey with work with him to identify vessels for the grant.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

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

To approve City Engineer Knauer working with Councilman Dickey to identify submerged vessels to include in grant money efforts.

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

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

Carried.

10. Old Business

11. New Business

- a. Mayor Barley
- b. Councilwoman Haffner
- c. Councilman Day
- d. Councilman Farris
- e. Councilwoman Brannon
- f. Councilman Dickey

12. Public Comment

Mr. Askew, a Freeport resident, explained a situation he is having with people on the adjoining property trespassing onto and damaging his property. He said he has contacted Walton County Sheriff's Office and the Veranda's Homeowner's Association to no avail. He expressed frustration and suggested a buffer be required when multifamily communities are built in the city. Planning Director Hughes-Neel said she would work with Mr. Askew on the matter.

Hammock Bay Developer Jay Odom announced the new brewery located in Hammock Bay will be opening May 20. He proudly gave details of the establishment including how some of the surrounding trees of the brewery

were repurposed for inside the building.


Justin Powell, Walton County Emergency Management Logistics Coordinator, offered to work with the city to update the special event permit process given the issues with the Tutu Trot permit. Planning Director Hughes-Neel asked Mr. Powell to contact her.

Steven Smith asked the Council to consider a change to the Land Development Code to preserve more trees.

13. Adjournment

With no other business, Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn at 7:44 p.m.

Minutes were prepared by City Clerk Gatewood and approved by the City Council on May 9, 2023.



Russ Barley, Mayor

ATTEST:



Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk

