



CITY OF FREEPORT  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

May 9, 2023, 9:00 AM  
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

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

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 Engineer Cliff Knauer, Water Supervisor Larry Tuggle, and Billing Supervisor Rebecca King

*City Clerk's Note: Councilwoman Haffner was absent with notice.*

**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**

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

**3. Recognition of Guests**

Mayor Barley welcomed Tim Parsons of Liberty Partners to the meeting.

**4. Consent Agenda**

a. Bills

b. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – April 27, 2023

**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

Mayor Barley called for 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:

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

Carried.

## **7. Consideration of Additions and Deletions to Agenda**

1. Wastewater Supervisor – Deletion – Lift Station Fencing
2. Wastewater Supervisor – Deletion - WWTP Lighting
3. Councilman Day – Addition – Food Vendors at the Sports Complex
4. City Manager Martin – Addition – For Engineering: Vessel Update

## **8. Approval of Agenda with Additions and Deletions**

Moved by: Councilman Farris  
Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

*To approve the agenda additions and deletion proposed.*

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

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

Carried.

## **9. Staff Reports**

a. Water

b. Sewer

### **1. Standby Pump Repair and Replacement**

Wastewater Supervisor Johnson presented quotes for either a repair or replacement of a standby pump. He said the existing pump is thirteen years old and if they repair it for \$47,341.97, it will still be an older model. He asked the Council for a motion to approve a new standby pump in the amount of \$68,040.21. Finance Officer Bowers confirmed there was money in the budget for the expenditure. The equipment being replaced will be repurposed with the city.

Moved by: Councilman Farris  
Seconded by: Councilman Day

Mayor Barley called for additional Council discussion and public comment.

*To approve the purchase of a new Standby Pump from Hydra Service, Inc. for \$68,040.21.*

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

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

Carried.

## 2. Rear Crank Truck Chassis

Wastewater Supervisor Johnson asked the Council for a motion to approve the purchase of a chassis for one of the department's existing trucks. He confirmed with Finance Officer Bowers that money was available for the purchase. He said the purchase would allow staff to finish a 45-minute job in only 10 minutes and it will increase safety in the workplace. City Manager Martin chimed in saying a new truck would cost around \$150,000.00 and this would cost far less at \$38,114.65.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

Mayor Barley called for additional Council discussion and public comment.

*To approve the purchase of a Rear Crank Truck Chassis from Fleetco. for \$38,114.65.*

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

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

Carried.

## 3. Air Scrubber

Wastewater Supervisor Johnson explained an air scrubber is to help reduce the odor from sewer activity. He said this scrubber would be used on CR 3280 and the good thing about this equipment is that it can be easily moved in the future to other locations that need it. He said the equipment can be used for one month as a trial before purchase and he asked for a motion to approve the expense if he is satisfied with the product.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

Mayor Barley called for additional Council discussion and public comment.

*To approve the purchase of a new Air Scrubber from Pump & Process for \$36,935.92.*

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

Councilman Day: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Brannon: aye

Councilman Dickey: aye

Carried.

c. Parks

1. Community Pool Swimming Lessons Fee

Parks Director Digges asked the Council for a motion to increase the swimming lesson fees, noting the fees have not been increased in many years and doing so would keep the cost below what other pools charge.

Moved by: Councilman Day

Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

Mayor Barley called for additional Council discussion and public comment.

*To increase the Community Pool swimming lessons fees to \$20.00 for the first person and \$15.00 per sibling*

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

Councilman Day: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Brannon: aye

Councilman Dickey: aye

Carried.

d. City Manager

1. Liberty Partners Legislative Update

Tim Parsons and Jennifer Green with Liberty Partners provided the Council with a legislative update.

2. City Website

City Manager Martin summarized previous meetings regarding a possible change in website providers and asked City Clerk Gatewood and Senior Planner Graves to outline the results of what the assembled committee found. They asked for a motion to approve a new website through Revize.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

*To approve a new website to be created and maintained by Revize.*

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

Councilman Day: aye

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Brannon: aye

Councilman Dickey: aye

Carried.

### 3. City Acceptance of Poff Property

City Manager Martin invited former City Manager Charlies Simmons to speak with the Council about the item presented. Mr. Simmons summarized how he, City Attorney Adkinson, and Engineer Knauer worked for the last year to make this donation a reality. He provided City Attorney Adkinson with a signed Special Warranty Deed to review. City Attorney Adkinson noted he drafted the document and with except of one typo, the document content was in order. Mr. Simmons advised that the property is between 7-1/2 to 8 acres and the appraisal amount is nearly \$500,000.00. He expressed what a generous gift this was from the owner. He said on the property still sits one of the regular Freeport houses from the 1800's. The goal is to create a living history park that visitors can visit, walk through, and learn the history of Freeport. Planning Director Hughes-Neel let the Council know she was able to negotiate the donation of the Old Schoolhouse from the Brown property to add to this land. Mr. Simmons suggested in time that the Old Post Office could be relocated to the living history park as well. He thanked everyone for their efforts and asked that the Council create a committee that includes Planning Director Hughes-Neel to help shape how the park will be created. City Attorney Adkinson made the Council aware of the restrictions on the Special Warranty Deed, which are: the park is to only be used for a park, museum, and roadway. Further, no portion will ever be sold or utilized for residential or commercial purposes, and any violations of these restrictions would result in the city's forfeiture of the property. He expressed what a critical piece of land this donation is for various reasons including better connectivity for roadways as the city grows. Councilwoman Brannon thanked Mr. Simmons for continuing with this project after he retired from his City Manager position. City Manager Martin said Mr. Simmons walked this project from cradle to grave

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and the city owes him a great deal of gratitude, to which everyone agreed. Councilman Farris echoed the compliments for Charlie and suggested Mr. Simmons also be on the committee. He also expressed thanks to Mrs. Poff for her donation. Mayor Barley asked how the park would be staffed considering the difficult time the city has had staffing the Old Post Office with volunteers. Planning Director Hughes-Neel said she had some ideas.

Moved by: Councilman Farris  
Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

*To accept the donation and dedication of the Poff Property subject to the Special Warranty Deed restrictions.*

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

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

Carried.

e. City Clerk

1. Asset Deletion

City Clerk Gatewood directed the Council to their meeting package to review the asset deletion list. She explained that after repurposing as many items as possible, this was the remainder and asked for a motion to for asset deletion. Items disposed of will be recycled by the city IT provider, Netdata.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon  
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

*To approve the asset deletion list as presented.*

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

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

Carried.

City Clerk Gatewood provided a quick update for the Clerk's Office saying she has been spending quite a bit of time scanning city documents and it is coming along nicely. She thanked the Council for their continued support.

- f. Finance
- g. Billing
- h. Planning
- i. Legal
- j. Engineering

City Engineer Knauer provided an update on the derelict vessel program. He met with Councilman Dickey, and it was discovered that a shrimp boat, one of the vessels on their list, is now on the FWC list for removal. This means it will be removed separately from the project the city is working on. He said the program Selection Committee meets in June to review applications and make award determinations. Awards will be mailed out near the end of July. He mentioned the derelict large steel barge and said the owner has given the title to FWC and in turn FWC will remove the vessel with no penalty to the former owner and the city will not have to spend any grant monies on removal.

City Engineer Knauer provided the Council with an update on Bear Creek Bridge.

Councilwoman Brannon asked if there were any updates on the sidewalk grant, to which City Engineer Knauer replied not yet. Planning Director Hughes-Neel said at the last Walton County Board of County Commissioners meeting they voted to accept the base bid and appointed Anna Hudson of Walton County Public Works to oversee the project.

#### **10. Old Business**

#### **11. New Business**

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

1. Councilman Day recalled at a recent Council meeting a discussion surrounding food trucks in the Regional Sports Complex. He was made aware of a law change in recent years that allows the food trucks to occupy the Regional Sports Complex and the city cannot regulate the activity. He expressed concern that this may cause issues in the future because the food trucks take up 18-20 parking spots on average and he feels it is a safety concern for kids to be running to/from the food trucks in the parking lot. He said he met with Parks Director Digges to discuss the matter and they determined a good place for food trucks

would be in the side back area near the one-story concession stand. A map was provided for visual aid. Parks Director Digges said he met with Councilman Day to discuss the situation. He said he has seen upwards of four food trucks with trailers on a given night taking up to 25-35 parking spots. He said when there are two food trucks, they tend to park out of the way. He explained he is receiving many messages inquiring about setting up at the Regional Sports Complex and that number will keep increasing because Hammock Bay gave the food trucks that have used their property for years notice that they cannot set up there anymore due to Props opening. He recalled his prior concern about trash from the food trucks becoming an issue but told the Council the food trucks have been extremely clean so far. He said on certain nights there are three sports events at once and it is already difficult to find a parking spot most of the time. He said he does not believe this is an urgent situation yet, but it has the potential to become one very fast. City Attorney Adkinson explained several options if the Council chooses to address the issue. Councilman Farris said he understands where Councilman Day is coming from with his concerns, but he does not want to get into regulating it.

City Manager Martin informed the Council that food vendors have been contacting City Clerk Gatewood asking about setting up in the lower portion of the City Hall parking lot. City Attorney Adkinson advised that City Hall is a governmental complex with a long-standing policy of keeping the parking lot available exclusively for governmental complex parking only. He further said the parking lot serves City Hall, Chelco, the Freeport Library, the Veteran's Memorial, soon to be Barrier Free Park, and the Community Pool. He said the governmental complex is not part of the parks system as it is defined in the city's code. Planning Director Hughes-Neel brought up that the lower portion of City Hall parking is a FDOT Park and Ride, which makes the lower portion ineligible for anything other than people parking cars to carpool. No action was taken.

## 12. Public Comment

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.


## 13. Adjournment


With no other business, Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn at 10:03 a.m.

Minutes were prepared by City Clerk Gatewood and approved by the City Council on May 25, 2023.



ATTEST:

  
Russ Barley, Mayor

  
Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk