

CITY OF FREEPORT
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

September 12, 2023, 9:00 AM
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Bud Day, Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner, 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, Parks Director Charles Bartlett, Water Supervisor Larry Tuggle, Wastewater Supervisor Paul Johnson, City Engineer Cliff Knauer, Billing Supervisor Rebecca King, Recreation and Events Manager Anne McKenzie, Senior Planner Samantha Graves, and HR Generalist Chris Quinley

1. Meeting called to order

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Mayor Barley in the Council Chambers of Freeport City Hall.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Councilwoman Haffner 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. Budget Workshop Minutes – August 8, 2023

c. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – August 8, 2023

d. Regular Council Meeting Minutes – August 24, 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 Haffner

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:

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

Carried.

7. Consideration of Additions to Agenda

1. City Attorney – Addition - Annexations
2. City Manager – Addition – Special Meeting request

8. Approval of Agenda with Additions

Moved by: Councilman Day
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve the agenda additions as requested.

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

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

Carried.

9. Staff Reports

- a. Water
- b. Sewer

Wastewater Supervisor Johnson discussed a bio-fermentation process for the Wastewater Treatment Plant to better move approximately 30-40% more waste content through the lines. Chris Whiteman, ABS, Inc. Business Development Manager, presented a PowerPoint of company information and answered questions. He explained the bio-fermentation process would eliminate the need for the city to continue renting a screw press and the rental fees saved will cover the cost of their service. City Manager Martin asked for a motion to move forward with ABS, Inc.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve moving forward with ABS, Inc. with the proposal presented.

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

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

Carried.

c. Parks

1. Field Fees

Recreation and Events Manager McKenzie directed the Council to field fee information in their package explaining that in 2008 the Council voted to increase field fees; however, today the fees do not reflect that prior action. She outlined major costs associated with operating the park including the fields and concession stand. She asked for a motion to approve the field fee increases as presented.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

Mayor Barley called for public comment.

Keith Kelly of Freeport Football and Cheer asked if this action would change their future yearly fee waiver, to which several Council Members said it does not change their stance on fee waivers, and City Attorney Adkinson commented the fee waivers will continue to be reviewed on a yearly basis as they are now.

To approve increasing field fees to the following:

<i>Light Usage Fee</i>	<i>\$40.00/hour</i>
<i>Hourly Rental Fee</i>	<i>\$25.00/hour</i>
<i>Lining/Set up Baseball</i>	<i>\$35.00/hour**</i>
<i>Lining/Set up Soccer</i>	<i>\$100.00/field**</i>

***based on cost of product and time/labor*

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

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

Carried.

2. Freeport Little League Fall Season Agreement Request and Discussion

Recreation and Events Manager McKenzie presented a Freeport Little League Fall Season Agreement Request to the Council. She advised as part of the agreement at least one field will be open at all times for public use. Councilman Day asked if days in the agreement would conflict with Fall Softball, to which she replied, no.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve the Freeport Little League Fall Season Agreement Request as presented.

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

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

Carried.

3. Field Reservations

Recreation and Events Manager McKenzie reminded the Council there was a motion in 2022 to allow Point N' Pay to be added to the city Municode website for online field reservations. She explained the city essentially did not continue with Municode and engaged with Revize for a new custom website. She asked for a motion to approve using Point N' Pay for the new custom Revize website for the field reservations section.

Moved by: Councilman Dickey
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve Point N' Pay for use on the city Revize custom website for the purpose of online field reservation payments.

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

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

Carried.

City Clerk's Note: City Manager items were heard out of sequence of the meeting agenda.

d. City Manager

1. Special Event Permit Application

City Manager Martin presented the Council with an updated version of the Special Event Permit Application and noting the area for how many days in advance of the event that the application needs to be submitted. He explained some special event permits take time to coordinate and process when agencies like Walton County Sheriff Office and Walton County Emergency Management CERT team need to be involved. He asked the Council for a motion establishing the number of days in advance for the form. City Clerk Gatewood offered that in her past experience with special events she feels 45 days is appropriate.

Councilman Farris commented he had met with the Walton County Sheriff's Office, and they requested have more notice for events so they can schedule properly.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To establish 45 days as the number of days in advance a special event permit application must be submitted for consideration.

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

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

Carried.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Day

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve the proposed Special Event Permit Application with 45 days as the number of days in advance needed to submit the application.

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

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

Carried.

2. Liberty Partners – Legislative Priorities

Tim Parsons of Liberty Partners provided a legislative update which included the FRDAP grant submittals for Pickleball Courts and the Barrier Free Park Trails. He noted a Water Quality Improvement Grant has been submitted and they are working on a multipurpose facilities grant for the Freeport Library and Community Center.

After discussing projects from the prior year, he asked the Council for a motion to establish city priorities so they can move forward with the soon-to-be-due appropriations request.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

Mayor Barley called for public comment.

Resident Manny Vitale asked about adding the Freeport Library project to the list. The Council let him know a grant application submittal has already been created for the Freeport Library.

To establish a city project priority list for appropriation requests.

- 1. Marquis Way Connector Project*
- 2. North Site Wastewater Treatment Plant – design and permitting*
- 3. Community Center*

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

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

Carried.

3. Marse Landing

City Manager Martin recalled the difficulty in receiving bids from multiple advertisements for the Marse Landing parking lot project. He presented the Council with a reasonable quote from the Walton County Road Department for the project. He asked for a motion to move forward with using the Walton County Road Department for the project.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner
Seconded by: Councilman Dickey

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve Walton County Road Department to conduct the parking lot work for the Marse Landing project for the grand total amount of \$23,670.03.

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

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

Carried.

4. Special Meeting Request

City Manager Martin requested a motion for a Special Meeting to take place on Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 5:00pm in Council Chambers to discuss sewer items.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Day

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve a Special Meeting on Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 5:00pm in Council Chambers to discuss sewer items.

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

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

Carried.

5. Walton County Economic Development Alliance (WCEDA)

City Manager Martin said at a recent City of Defuniak Springs Budget Meeting, the Council discussed possibly having one of the Council to be the voting representative instead of their Mayor for their city and also requesting to add a non-voting/ex officio member because they are paying more money now to the Walton County Economic Development Alliance. He asked for a motion stating the City of Freeport is requesting the same as the City of Defuniak Springs.

He also updated the Council that Walton County agreed to matching the 4.95 per capita for funding, which resulted in the county contributing approximately \$21,000.00 additional funds.

City Attorney Adkinson clarified that the City of Defuniak Springs is requesting two members on the WCEDA board, both selected by the City Council, one with full voting rights, and one ex officio.

Councilman Farris and Councilwoman Haffner agreed that Mayor Barley has done a great job on the WCEDA board. Councilwoman Haffner noted that because the city is paying a lot more towards WCEDA she feels responsible for those funds and believes the city needs more representation.

Mayor Barley commented that he has been on the WCEDA board for ten years and there has never been an issue with his voting until now, saying he is just as intelligent as anyone else on the Council and if there was a problem it should have been stated long ago. He reminded the Council that when he votes, the vote is based on what is good for the county and not just the city.

City Attorney Adkinson clarified with City Manager Martin that his requested motion is to ask for the seats and to designate members to the seat at a later time which he confirmed.

City Manager Martin gave the backstory that led to this point and the WCEDA Executive Director's need for more funding. Mayor Barley commented that additional funding was needed because there is no WCEDA support staff, and the Executive Director cannot properly perform his job without help. Councilman Farris expressed his stance that regardless of what the City of Defuniak Springs does with their seats, that in Freeport the Mayor has done a great job with WCEDA and should remain on the board. Councilwoman Brannon clarified the motion requested today is just to add the second seat, to which City Attorney Adkinson said yes and explained the motion.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To officially request as part of the City of Freeport's funding commitment, that the City Council requests two seats with Walton County Economic

Development Alliance, one with full voting rights, and the other as a non-voting ex officio member.

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

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

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

Carried.

Councilwoman Haffner brought up a recent City of Defuniak Springs budget meeting, mentioning a comment she heard from their Mayor, Bob Campbell, saying the City of Freeport has not paid their fair share of WCEDA funding. She disagreed with Mayor Campbell and recalled that each time WCEDA asked for money the city paid that amount, and she feels they have paid their fair share to help their neighboring cities and county. Councilwoman Brannon agreed with Councilwoman Haffner and expressed that in all her years in government she has not experienced a city making negative comments about another municipality or county.

e. City Clerk

f. Finance

g. Billing

h. Planning

i. Legal

1. Annexation

City Attorney Adkinson presented the Council with four different parcel maps. He explained the reasoning behind a bulk submittal and the timing was due to a number of changes from the State Legislature regarding local government ordinances. Among the changes was one to the Annexation section of Florida Statute 171, which requires certain annexations to have a feasibility study conducted. He said because the law was unclear staff waited until it was signed by the Governor to avoid any retroactive actions the city may have to do. City Attorney Adkinson stated in his opinion that under Florida Statute 171.044 the voluntary annexation provision that the feasibility studies are not relevant to the City of Freeport. As part of the ordinances moving forward each one would have attached to it a statement from the City Planner, City Engineer, and City Attorney that in lieu of a feasibility study, if determined at some point to be necessary, that the City already services the area or would not service the area; therefore,

there is no cost impact to the City and no disenfranchisement of any of the residents. City Attorney Adkinson asked for a motion to authorize him to advertise pursuant to Florida Statute 171.044 for the proposed parcels and to bring them back to the Council. He explained for this specific type of annexation, Florida now requires the ordinance advertise to include an ordinance number.

After Council discussion the parcel map for State Road 20 was omitted, leaving three parcel maps for consideration.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To authorize City Attorney Adkinson to advertise pursuant to Florida Statute 171.044 the following proposed parcel annexation ordinances for adoption and bring them back to the Council. Ordinance 2023-03, Ordinance 2023-04, and Ordinance 2023-05 (pending survey).

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

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

Carried.

j. Engineering

11. Old Business

12. New Business

a. Mayor Barley

1. Christmas Parade – S.R. 20 Discussion

Mayor Barley asked the Council for a motion to approve the 2023 Christmas Parade to take place on Saturday, December 2, 2023 starting at 5:15pm at Freeport Middle School. The parade will travel along Kylea Laird, turn right onto S.R. 20, pass City Hall, and end at Blueberry Road. Approved minutes are required in order to submit an FDOT temporary road closure permit for the parade.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve the 2023 Christmas Parade to take place on Saturday, December 2, 2023 starting at 5:15pm at Freeport Middle School, which would require a FDOT temporary road closure permit for State Road 20.

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

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

Carried.

2. City Historian

Mayor Barley told the Council resident Leslie England that has been volunteering in the Heritage Museum and has expressed interest in becoming the City Historian. He said Ms. England moved to Freeport a few years ago with her teenage son, who also volunteers in the museum, and she has recently joined the Town Planters Society. He recommended a motion to name Ms. England as City Historian.

Moved by: Council
Seconded by: Council



Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.

To approve resident Leslie England as City Historian.

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

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

Carried.

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

13. Public Comment

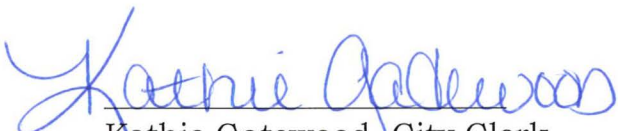
Mayor Barley called for public comment and there was none.


14. Adjournment

With no other business, Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn at 10:19 a.m.

Minutes were prepared by City Clerk Gatewood and approved by the City Council on September 28, 2023.

ATTEST:


Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk


Russ Barley, Mayor

