



CITY OF FREEPORT  
WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

March 9, 2023, 6:00 p.m.  
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

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

Staff Members Present: City Manager Mark Martin, City Clerk Kathie Gatewood, Planning Director Latilda Hughes-Neel, Senior Planner Samantha Graves, Parks Director Travis Digges, and City Engineer Alex Rouchaleau

*City Clerk's Note: City Attorney Adkinson was absent with notice.*

**1. Meeting called to order**

The workshop was called to order at 5:46 p.m. by Mayor Barley in the Council Chambers of Freeport City Hall.

**2. New Community Center Discussion**

Senior Planner Graves said the purpose of the workshop is to discuss what goes inside the new Community Center. She directed the Council to the site plan handouts and invited City Engineer Rouchaleau to speak.

*City Clerk's Note: The above-mentioned site plan documents are available in the City Clerk's office.*

City Engineer Rouchaleau said there were questions from Engineer Rudy Mall to go over. He directed the Council to the current layout and asked about the batting cages where the dry stormwater pond will be located, and wanted to confirm they are okay with demolishing the batting cages. He also inquired about the playground equipment that includes the rope net area, saying those items need to be demolished or relocated and asked for the Council's opinion. He asked if the Council wanted to include any parking lot or stormwater improvements around the Planning Department to bring them up to current standards or leave everything as-is. He said the proposed stormwater pond to the south of the Planning Department is unnecessary because most of the flow will travel to the north.

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He showed the Council a photo of oak trees and said the limbs may be in the way of the proposed Community Center and asked for input whether to adjust the site plan or see how far the limbs could be cut back.

Councilwoman Brannon said she loves everything she has seen but had a question about the batting cages. She recalled that the batting cages, which were part of a grant, had a condition of how long they had to stay in place. Planning Director Hughes-Neel recalled it had a long-term requirement and she would do some research to find the expiration date. Planning Director Hughes-Neel also noted that the trees are Live Oaks and with the right equipment and professionals they can be trimmed back without issue. Councilwoman Brannon said she wants to leave the trees and trim them. Councilman Farris and Councilwoman Haffner agreed. Councilman Day also agreed and commented that there are too many trees disappearing today.

Councilman Farris asked about the playground equipment and rope net and if it could remain in the same area because of its high use. Parks Director Digges reminded the Council that the rope net portion of the playground was donated. He said the rope needs replacing due to wear. He said there is another one in the Regional Sports Complex that is smaller, that also needs the rope replaced and that will cost around \$30,000.00-\$40,000.00 so the one at City Hall is larger and will be more expensive. He said he does not recommend relocating the rope net portion without replacing the ropes. Councilman Farris said the rope net at the Regional Sports Complex is well used but the one in question can probably be removed. Parks Director Digges suggested if the rope net is removed to replace it with something smaller. City Engineer said they would move forward with the layout as shown for the playground equipment and see where they are at once the Community Center is constructed.

City Engineer Rouchaleau brought up parking lots improvement around the Planning Department and Planning Director Hughes-Neel said she had \$20,000.00 in her budget specifically for parking lot improvements as well as some funds in her fees and buyouts category that can be used for this project. City Engineer Rouchaleau said the pavement on both sides of the planning department that leads to the back is very worn. He suggested an alternate plan for resurfacing this area if construction causes a lot more damage, or they can look into repaving the entire area and add stormwater improvements with it. Councilman Day commented that construction will take up the whole Planning Department parking lot and they should look into repaving it and whatever else it needs. Planning Director Hughes-Neel said the rear parking lot needs to be resurfaced and striped, and that her design changes the parking spaces to be more efficient. City Engineer Rouchaleau said they will focus on resurfacing. Councilman Day said there was no need for stormwater improvements if the flow is going north to the dry pond and there was no further discussion to add stormwater improvements.

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Mayor asked to keep the examples a neutral color.

### 3. Public Comment

Planning Director Hughes-Neel expressed the importance of honoring the history of Freeport. She asked the Council to consider naming the Community Center after one of Freeport's founders. She suggested that Gertrude "Trudy" Boudreaux, who passed away in 2020, be considered to memorialize her lifelong dedication to causes that benefited the City of Freeport. The naming for the Community Center will take place at a future meeting.


### 4. Adjournment

Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn, and the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Minutes were prepared by City Clerk Gatewood and approved by the City Council on March 23, 2023.

  
Russ Barley, Mayor



  
Kathie Gatewood, City Clerk

Architect Anthony Vallee asked the Council for input on the interior of the Community Center design. He explained the various areas of the inside and informed the Council the structure will hold two hundred people.

He explained that for the Catering Kitchen, if they add any sort of permanent heating equipment, the building code will require a hood and with that the price of the area will increase by fifty thousand dollars or more. He said plugin small appliances (toaster oven, microwave, and so on) that will heat food would be allowed. He mentioned that in the front of the building there is a counter for a Drink Station.

Councilman Farris said in the stage area there must be dressing rooms in the back, and bathrooms in the dressing rooms similar to the new construction at the elementary school. He said these details are important because with them the city can have productions in this Community Center like Grit & Grace and the like. He said he liked the idea of having another door to come in or out. After a group discussion regarding the back area and the need for a dressing room and bathroom, it was decided that a half bathroom in the back would be a good idea. Planning Director Hughes-Neel discussed curtain options to direct foot traffic.

City Manager Martin said from a storage perspective they need to ensure the Community Center details would also meet the needs of the Supervisor of Elections if they chose to use it for elections, to which several people said they thought the Supervisor of Elections was going to use the County Community Center that just opened. City Manager Martin said he would contact the Supervisor of Elections for more information.

Councilwoman Brannon said she hates to add to the expense of the Community Center, but she agrees with Councilman Farris that there needs to be a bathroom in one of the storage areas.

Mr. Vallee asked if the Council wanted a permanent stage or one that could be moved to create more space when needed, to which the Council replied permanent.

He asked for guidance on finishes, noting the wet areas would have tile finishes and the kitchen would have fiberglass boards.

Mr. Vallee said the walls would be sheet rock. He discussed ceiling options and Mayor Barley asked if the ceiling could be like the one in the Council Chambers, to which he said yes. There was a discussion about mounted lighting and audio options. He asked about flooring options and after a discussion about tile flooring, he told the Council carpet would be best to avoid sound issues in the building. Councilwoman Haffner asked Mr. Vallee if he could bring them some examples later so they can make a flooring decision and he said yes.

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