

Council Meeting Minutes
Town Hall
December 12, 2023
7:00 p.m.

Council Members
Present:

Dynette Lewis, Council President
Sandra McMurray Jackson
Shelisa McCall Abraham
Alicia Johnson
Henry Cunningham

Others Present:

Leslie Howington, Town Clerk
Luis Gomez Jr., Interim Mayor

Council President Dynette Lewis confirmed the advertisement of the Council Meeting/Bill List Review and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Open Meeting with Prayer

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

4. Public Forum

Escambia County Department of Health

Health educators at the Tobacco division want to discuss a no smoking policy in public parks. They provided informational material.

Helen Mincy thanked Dale Long for working with her on the current project she is working on. Interim Mayor Gomez helped as well. Mincy purchased 60-70 trees but doesn't know when they'll be delivered.

Helen Mincy also shared that the parade was very nice.

Helen Mincy thanked Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson and said we really appreciate you always looking out for the Town.

5. Ministerial Acts

a. Approval of Minutes

- January 17, 2023
- February 7, 2023
- February 21, 2023
- September 5, 2023

Council President Dynette Lewis requested a motion to approve the January 17, 2023, February 7, 2023, February 21, 2023, and September 5, 2023 Minutes.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion.

Council Member Henry Cunningham seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of December 12, 2023 Bill List

- December 12, 2023, Bill List

Council President Dynette Lewis requested a motion to approve the December 12, 2023 Bill List with the exception of Hawkins invoice 6639705.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion

Council Member Shelisa McCall Abraham seconded the motion

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

Council President Dynette Lewis turned the floor over to Interim Mayor Luis Gomez.

Interim Mayor Gomez requested to move the Interim Town Manager to the top of the list.

He has been thoroughly vetted, and the Council gave the green light to enter into a contract. Matt Dannheisser reviewed the contract.

Interim Mayor Gomez opened the floor for conversation.

Interim Mayor Gomez stated that some in the community questioned his credentials. He is here to respond.

Council President Dynette Lewis invited comments.

Council Member Shelisa McCall Abraham asked if we did a background check.

Town Clerk Leslie Howington stated we did not.

Interim Mayor Gomez interviewed each of the three candidates and this is the top candidate.

Council Member Shelisa McCall Abraham asked if the interview is considered a background check. Interim Mayor Gomez thoroughly vetted Mr. Brown.

Interim Mayor Gomez stated our local blogs have thoroughly vetted him.

Council Member Shelisa McCall Abraham stated that is not a reliable source.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson stated after tonight, implement a background check.

Interim Mayor Gomez stated that is something Mr. Brown can implement and noted that this was the route the Council chose.

Interim Mayor Gomez stated this meeting is just to approve the contract. It is under budget. If the Council votes to hire him, he can work on issues with structure.

Council President Dynette Lewis stated that it should be procedural in the background check is something to perform.

Council Member Alicia Johnson suggested we might want to develop a policy for the future.

Interim Mayor Gomez stated if we hire this gentlemen to come to work, he will bring structure that we've never had.

Citizen said we are in the stone age for not having a background check. Every job everywhere has that in place.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson noted it is time for a change.

Council President requested a motion to allow the mayor to sign the contract with Mr. Brown.

Council Member Shelisa McCall Abraham asked if the motion should be to allow Mayor Gomez to enter into an agreement with Local Government Consultant Group for Interim Town Manager services.

Council President Dynette Lewis requested a motion to that effect.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion

No further questions. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Robert Hudson – Financials for October

Robert Hudson presented financials for October. Robert left the room.

Helen Mincy asked if hiring Mr. Brown will help Mayor get her street cleaned that she showed him many times. Interim Mayor Gomez will see where the guys are in the work list.

Robert Hudson returned to the room and spoke to Council on Financials for October.

Robert Hudson:

Only one month reporting. We do not have the Gas Fund because BP had a computer glitch and we don't know what to pay them.

General

\$1,700 short in our budget revenue, but we are \$5,000 less in expenditures. It's a 12-month budget worked on in the summer.

Special Revenue Fund

Budgeted for ARPA Funds, but not spent any, so no transfer has occurred.

Water Fund

Short of the budgeted amount for October. We have an operating transfer for the year. The \$99,000 is our bond transfer and gets transferred in September. Expenses are about \$11,000 under.

Garbage is over the budget by \$500.

Robert Hudson pointed out that we are working on getting approval from Matt Danhiesser and the auditor.

\$2.7 million debt that the General Fund opens to the special revenue fund.

Council President Dynette Lewis asked where the \$2 million came from.

Robert Hudson stated we addressed this when we did the Gas Fund and intended to do the General Fund the same way. Fixed assets were bought in the General Fund, and he has a list that wipes that out. An operating transfer should have been made from Special Revenue to refund the General Fund. We have an itemized depreciation schedule that Robert Hudson, Matt Danhiesser, and the auditor will meet to approve each one.

Interim Mayor Gomez recapped the history and wanted Mr. Hudson to settle it with the attorney and auditor. They did not sound enthused about your idea. We have been trying to clear this up since 2017.

Robert Hudson stated every year since then, the Council has approved the transfer of Special Revenue to reimburse the enterprise funds and General Fund.

There were no other questions on the financials.

7. Ben Townes, Architect – Carver Community Center Floorplan Options

Mr. Townes explained that he is there to present the best shape for the facility.

He passed out paper floorplans and had large floorplans on easels. The buildings are all the same square footage. He is there for feedback to see what the Town would like to see in the building.

1. The exact shape of the existing building. SHIPA does not like this because they do not want a replication.

Council Member Alicia Johnson asked what programs are planned. That will allow us to know how to use the space.

Council President Dynette Lewis responded that has not been determined yet.

2. Exact same size divided up differently.

Helen Mincy asked why things were moved around.

That is Ben Townes purpose tonight. The location of the building instructs the site. He and Dale Long recommend moving the building on the site.

Helen asked why there are five offices?

Ben Townes stated we can take them out. This is why we're today. To determine what is needed and wanted.

Ben Townes said we are here tonight to get a shape. That gives us options of what we can do on the site.

Council President Dynette Lewis likes the flexibility of having the large room. The large room could be partitioned off with removable walls.

Council Member Alicia Johnson said so much time has lapsed and prices are going up. She would like to see this moving forward.

Robin Phillips recalled that the meeting instruction was "just design something." We'd like to have guidance from citizens and the Council. Ben Townes is here today for guidance.

Robin Phillips was told it would be used for the same reason such as childcare. It is Covid funded and the State wants it built for testing.

Helen Mincy said it is the citizens. Why not leave it as classrooms?

Robin Phillips stated we're brainstorming. We can't rebuild it the way it is.

Helen Mincy stated we don't need five classrooms.

Council President Dynette Lewis said we are building it for the children.

Council Member Henry Cunningham stated this is not the final thing.

Council President Dynette Lewis asked if Ms. Mincy has looked at all of them.

Council Member Alicia Johnson said you're looking at the one the State does not like.

3. Large Room

Ben Townes stated we were asked to do one that basically replicates the Ag Building. One large room and a kitchen.

Interim Mayor Gomez like that one.

Mr. Smith, a citizen, stated that's what we need.

Robin Phillips said let's narrow down the options so Mr. Townes will know how to proceed.

Ben Townes stated moving the building closer to the woods is the best option.

Council President Dynette Lewis confirmed that all proposals are 6,600.

Ben Townes said that was the criteria that came from the last meeting. Use the same square footage.

Council Member Dynette Lewis suggested the partitions can temporarily create rooms.

Helen Mincy addressed Council Member Dynette Lewis. Ms. Mincy knows that building inside and out.

Interim Mayor Gomez noted that we need to modify the grant. We need to make a decision and move forward.

Council Member Shelisa McCall Abraham asked what is the time period to get started if we approve the building and the site.

Council President Dynette Lewis noted that Mr. Smith and Ms. Mincy could be on a committee.

Interim Mayor Gomez asked when is the end date.

Robin Phillips responded that the state sat on it so long, that it is already expired and is on the Mayor's desk to sign.

After lengthy discussion, a motion to approve floorplan B was requested. Then Dale Long can bring a site recommendation.

Ben Townes asked how to use the kitchen. Mr. Townes asked will there be a daycare, or afterschool, will we need several refrigerators.

Council President Dynette Lewis suggested the larger, fully operational kitchen with a convection oven, ice machine refrigerators and freezers.

Council President Lewis requested a motion to approve Floorplan B for the Carver Community Center Project.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson made the motion.

Council Member Henry Cunningham seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Robin Phillips – Grant Modification and Extension

Robin Phillips amendment to Carver Community Center Grant to extend the time on the grant by one year.

Council President Dynette Lewis requested a motion to authorize Interim Mayor Gomez to execute the extension.

Council Member Alicia Johnson asked will they approve a longer time.

Robin Phillips stated she asked for this amendment in July and just received it. She will ask again.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

Robin Phillips

The WWLS project to extend the grant for six months. It ends in January.

Pilgrim Lodge and Industrial Park.

Council Member Henry Cunningham made the motion.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Leslie Howington – Resolution 12-2023 Garbage Rates

Town Clerk Leslie Howington read the Agenda Summary Sheet .

Details on the \$27.99

Council Member Dynette Lewis approved the 2024 rates of \$27.44 for garbage service and \$6.23 for a second can

Council Member Alicia Johnson does not agree with the increase.

Leslie Howington shared the 1-2023 and 12-2023 spreadsheets and explained that by resolution, Vernon Prather, added an administrative fee. These rates are all increased by the CPI of 5.25% in the Resolution.

Motion to pass the Resolution amended the to increase 5.25% to \$17.10 on Republic's garbage service and remain at last year's rates for the Curbside Debris \$6.99 and Service Fee \$3.35

Motion failed for lack of a motion. Will increase \$17.10. Last year's rates will remain the same because they were approved by the council.

10. Mayor Gomez – ARPA Purchases

Interim Mayor Gomez explained the benefit of the 2" pipe and the fact that the Town has to borrow from neighbors during emergencies. We have a vac truck that fills up fast. Interim Mayor Gomez recommended two. Leslie Howington reported Kevin Merchant not to exceed amount as \$1,650 each. \$3,300 for two.

Council President Dynette Lewis requested a motion to approve the purchase of two 2" mud pumps an amount not to exceed \$3,300.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

Interim Mayor Gomez stated we borrowed portable lights from a citizen. Last week, Kevin Merchant went to Ace Hardware and bought a small light. Kevin Merchant stated the light tower he has looked at is \$11,500 from USA Blue Book.

Interim Mayor Gomez stated the kerosene heater is \$450. When they are in a hole in waste deep water and it's cold, they need that.

Council President Dynette Lewis confirmed one of each.

Council President Dynette Lewis requested a motion to approve the purchase of the light tower for \$11,500 and the kerosene heater for \$450 for a total cost of \$11,950 an amount not to exceed. Purchase from ARPA Funds.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

Piggybacking was discussed. Leslie Howington explained charter.

Smith said state trumps the attorney's opinion.

Fedcorp

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion.

Leslie Howington read the contract.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

Read flooring. Tabled to get mirrored quotes.

Postage Machine tabled

Reviewed insurance hike

AC ongoing services.

Mr. Brown stated we must have a contract with the local vendor.

Interim Mayor Gomez requested an opportunity to call Preston Tate to clarify what the Town is looking for.

Mr. Smith stated prequalify more than one .

11. Mayor Gomez – Interim Town Manager

Agenda should be amended and Item 11 moved to Item 6.

12. Staff Reports

Leslie Howington stated Mr. Jowers provided two panels for the well. The Town has had them for five years. Mr. Jowers took them to his shop and one of the starters did not start up and needs to be replaced. It takes time to build them, so he wants to get it approved tonight. The anticipated cost is \$9,488 and can be funded through Legislation Appropriations.

The Town will pay and Legislative Appropriations will reimburse.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made a motion to get started as soon as possible in order for Mr. Jowers to order the soft start equipment and to pay out of Legislative Appropriations in the amount of \$9,8488.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

Tom there is no easement there. We hope to correct that between the town and the property owner and have an easement. The access from Hecker Road has been cut off.

Yoshida Street. Shows up on Google Maps.

Requested council approve in concept what Matt Dannheisser regarding an easement into APP.

After the Town Manager approves Mr. Dannheisser.

Council Member Alicia Johnson made the motion.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Mayor's Report

Mayor Gomez wished everyone a Merry Christmas and invited them to the Town Christmas party.

14. Council Comments

Nothing for Council Comments

15. Public Forum

Mr. Brown thanked the Council for approving the contract and would like to meet individually with each Council Member in the next two weeks.

16. Adjourn

With no further business to discuss Council President Dynette Lewis requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Council Member Sandra McMurray Jackson made the motion.

Council Member Shelisa McCall Abraham seconded the motion.

No questions. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
