

# **CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION**

**321 WALNUT STREET, GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA  
TUESDAY, MAY 06, 2025 – 6:00 PM**



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## **MINUTES**

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Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag - **Youth Pastor Travis Ivey, Hickory Grove Baptist Church**

Roll Call

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Steven Kelley, Vice Mayor Thomas Smith, Council Member Connie Butler, Council Member Ed Gaw, Council Member Matt Johnson

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** L.J. Arnold, III, City Attorney, Steve Kennedy, City Manager, Mike Null, Assistant City Manager, Erin West, City Clerk

Mayor to call on members of the audience wishing to address the Council on matters not on the Agenda.

1. Doug Conkey with the St. Johns River Water Management District expresses gratitude for the city's conservation efforts, particularly regarding water management, and acknowledges Rachel Fox, the Chair of the Clay Soil and Water Conservation District for accepting the proclamation. He highlighted the significance of the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan, a 20-year strategy addressing the stressed aquifer, first identified in 2017 and reaffirmed in 2023. Over 50% of household water use is for irrigation, exacerbated by modern irrigation systems that make overuse easy. Utilities like JEA and St. John's are implementing stricter measures, such as controlling reclaimed water valves to curb overuse. Mr. Conkey spoke about the \$120 million Black Creek Project and a larger upcoming project to transfer 40 million gallons of water daily to recharge the aquifer.
2. Travis Ivey speaks on behalf of their father, Arthur Ivey, who dedicated over 36 years to Green Cove Springs, working in various roles including the water department, sewer, public works, and as Public Works Director, Assistant Director, and Street Supervisor. Mr. Ivey advises his father contributed to city festivals, supported City Council election campaigns, and was instrumental in building city infrastructure like streets, utility lines, storm drains, and the holding pond off Martin Luther King Boulevard. He also crafted concrete picnic tables for Spring Park and decorated the city during Christmas. Despite a previous rejection, Mr. Ivey requests the city to reconsider naming something in honor of their father, emphasizing his lifelong devotion and significant contributions to Green Cove Springs.

Mayor Kellyer acknowledges Mr. Ivy's father for his dedicated service to Green Cove Springs and expresses appreciation for such contributions. Mayor Kelley notes that his story of going above and beyond is shared by many city employees over the years and recognizes the challenges of naming a street or making a dedication but knows the importance of celebrating those who have given so much to the city.

3. Christopher Allen, representing Java Jitters LLC, expressed concern over the business's exclusion from the 2025 Riverfest despite years of participation and community involvement. He stated that their removal, made by the city manager's executive assistant, followed a conversation about potential infrastructure improvements in Spring Park, which Java Jitters offered to fund. Allen cited a lack of transparency, possible bias, and a previous incident of wrongful accusation. He requested vendor reinstatement, a review of the decision-making process, and the creation of fair and transparent vendor policies.

Mayor Kelley advises that the situation will be investigated and be made sure everything is being handled by protocol. Mayor Kelleys advises the city has done many, many of these events and asked if Java Jitters was reinstated, if they would still need the 100amp service?

Mr. Allen advises they have coffee broilers so 100 amps is preferred but they can make 50 amps work.

4. Chris Allen Chris Allen of Java Jitters discussed the business's long-standing involvement in Riverfest since 2012 and its growth alongside the event. He noted their increased power needs due to expanded operations and offered to fund electrical upgrades rather than rely on generators, communicating this to city staff. Allen referenced a miscommunication that led to their exclusion from the 2025 Riverfest and echoed concerns shared earlier by a family member. He concluded by thanking the Council for the opportunity to speak.
5. Mike Kelter 630 Mrytle Ave. GCS advises he has three items. #1 Mr. Kelter remembers meeting Arthur Ivey, a long-time city employee, shortly before his retirement. He advised he had mixed feelings about him but affirmed his significant contributions to Green Cove Springs, strongly supporting the idea of commemorating him in the city. #2 Mr. Kelter requests the Mayor have City Attorney Arnold provide a briefing, possibly at a future meeting, on the status of the school board's unpaid debt of approximately \$209,000 to the city, based on his latest calculation. #3 Mr. Kelter advises there are three public hearings on the agenda, suggesting many attendees are likely to be there for hearing eight and recommends the Mayor consider rearranging the order of hearings to accommodate attendees focused on specific issues.

Mayor Kelley advises the agenda order for public hearings was discussed with city staff, noting the importance of all items, particularly as they affect residents', and decided to maintain the current order, believing it will proceed smoothly without major issues.

6. Linda Hobbs advises she is a 24-year resident of Green Cove Springs, and expressed frustration with the city's rising costs, including wastewater and stormwater fees. She loves the city and enjoys events like Food Truck Friday but is upset by a proposed 14% rate hike. She urges that new developments, not residents, should bear the cost of infrastructure improvements to avoid further financial strain on Green Cove residents.

### **AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

1. Proclamation: Public Service Recognition Week  
Mayor Kelley reads and presents the proclamation.

2. Proclamation: Mental Health Awareness Month  
Mayor Kelley reads and presents the proclamation.  
Suzanne Mailloux, CEO of NAMI Jacksonville, thanks the City Council for recognizing NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and declaring May Mental Health Awareness Month for the third consecutive year. She highlighted NAMI as a volunteer-driven organization supporting individuals and families affected by mental health conditions, offering free resources.
3. Proclamation: National Police Week  
Vice Mayor Smith reads and presents the proclamation.
4. Proclamation: National Safe Boating Week  
Vice Mayor Smith reads and presents the proclamation.  
Chuck Whipple with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary thanks the City Council for recognizing Safe Boating Week and discusses boating safety, including wearing life jackets and ensuring proper equipment on boats.

### PRESENTATIONS

5. FMPA - May 2025 **Bob Page**  
Mr. Page presents the May report.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS

6. Public Hearing – Second Public Hearing to support application for a grant in the 23-24 CDBG Grant cycle. **Mike Null and Melissa Fox, Fred Fox Enterprises**  
Melissa Fox with Fred Fox Enterprises presents on the grant cycle and application. She advises the city to anticipate applying for a federal fiscal year 2023-2024 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$1,275,000 in the neighborhood revitalization category. For each activity that is proposed, at least 70% of the funds must benefit low-to-moderate income people for which the city is applying. Ms. Fox advises service area number one is the flood and drainage service improvement service area, which includes all the occupied residential properties who benefit from the city's Oak Ridge Basin stormwater collection system. This project proposes installing approximately 5,800 linear feet of stormwater piping, swales, and inlets along with improvements to the stormwater retention pond located at the corner of Martin Luther King Boulevard and Oak Ridge Avenue and all required restoration to disturbed areas. The installation will be along the following streets:  
Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard from between Oak Ridge Avenue on the west and Highland Avenue on the east.  
Center Street between Oak Ridge Avenue on the west and Highland Avenue on the east.  
Palmer Street between Oak Ridge Avenue on the west and Highland Avenue on the east.  
Spruce Street between Oak Ridge Avenue on the west and Highland Avenue on the east.  
Forest Street between Oak Ridge Avenue on the west and Highland Avenue on the east.  
Walnut Street between Oak Ridge Avenue on the west and Highland Avenue on the east.  
Highland Avenue between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the north and Walnut Street on the south  
Oakland Avenue between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the north and Walnut Street on the south.

The city is applying for the \$1,275,000 in CDBG funds and also has on the agenda tonight committing \$50,000 to match towards this project, bringing the total project cost to \$1,325,000. The LMI benefit is at least 51%.

Mayor Keller opens the public hearing.

Mike Kelter 630 Myrtle Ave. GCS supports this project.

Following no further comments, Mayor Kelley closes the public hearing.

Council Member Gaw asks about the cost of the project. The total project cost is \$1.35 million and the CDBG grant is \$1.25 million. He advises the total project cost is probably going to be more than the \$125 million that is being requested from CDBG and asks about limitations.

Ms. Fox advises the city to ask for more, but your score is going to go significantly down. The city has a better shot of asking for a lower amount because it's not a huge area. She believes there are about 150 homes that are served by that area.

Mayor Kelley expressed gratitude for the work done and the citizens' participation in the CDGB cycle. He spoke about the increased efforts that could potentially reduce or eliminate the second loan, possibly leading to future stormwater fee relief. Mayor Kelley emphasized the importance of the project and encouraged leveraging CDBG funds, for which they qualify, through the work of grant writers.

**Motion to approve the second public hearing to support application for a grant and the 23-24 CDBG grant cycle.**

Motion made by Vice Mayor Smith, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

7. First Reading of Ordinance O-06-2025 for the Modification of the Graylon Oaks PUD. ***Michael Daniels***

City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-06-2025 by title.

Development Services Director Michael Daniels presents on the ordinance.

Mayor Kelley opens the public hearings.

Following no comments, Mayor Kelley closes the public hearing.

Council Member Butler questions how this will affect ad valorem.

Mr. Daniels advises he can't speak to whether it will increase or not, but it would essentially be the same design just with two units.

Council Member Gaw questions how ownership will be determined on a single lot and suggests that the advantage of such ownership could be flexibility or affordability, as it allows purchasing only one unit instead of both.

Mr. Daniels explains that for a single lot with a duplex, one owner could live in one unit and rent the other or rent both units. This setup provides the opportunity for individual ownership rather than renting and if someone wanted to buy just one unit to live in with family, they could, but in this case, the preference was for a duplex ownership structure.

Mayor Kelley supports the proposed development as it could create more homeownership opportunities by allowing two owners on a single property, which he believes fosters greater community contribution compared to renters.

Mayor Kelley reopens the public hearing.

Jim Darling 3469 Oglebay Dr. GCS expressed concern about replacing only part of a roof in a community due to aesthetic issues. When roofs are split and replaced with different colors or designs, it can look unappealing. Mr. Darling asked whether the entire roof must be replaced or just half, as a partial replacement might negatively impact the community's appearance.

Mayor Kelley closes the public hearing.

Mr. Daniels advises that the community will have a homeowner's association (HOA), and the issue of roof replacement will be addressed in the HOA's governing documents, which will be provided as part of the subdivision.

**Motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance O-06-2025 to amend the Graylon Oaks Planned Unit Development for form and legality.**

Motion made by Council Member Butler, Seconded by Council Member Johnson.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

8. First Reading of Ordinance No. O-07-2025, amending City Code Chapter 90, Article III, Electric Utility, section 90-122 entitled "rate schedule for electricity furnished"; and section 90-123 entitled "fees for capital installation in the electric department"; and section 90-61, "security and night-lights"; and section 90-62 "meters, generally, a new service connection charge; temporary service, generally". *Mike Null*

City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-07-2025 by title.

Mayor Kelley speaks about the proposed utility rate increase, stressing that it is a serious decision driven by multiple factors, not taken lightly by the council. The increase is needed to fund improvements to the electric distribution system and to offset annual losses incurred under current rates, not influenced by economic recovery or new development. The council represents nearly 11,000 people, and oversees multiple utilities with health and safety obligations, aiming to provide reliable, high-value service. Past issues with high rates and unreliable service have been improved through tough decisions and trust in staff. He mentioned aging infrastructure, like 45-year-old transformers and a 23 kV system needing upgrades, which are unrelated to new development. With only 4,000 customers, unlike larger utilities like Clay Electric with 200,000, rate increases have a significant impact, and the council is mindful of this burden.

Assistant City Manager Mike Null provides a brief background on the need for a utility rate increase in Green Cove Springs. No electric rate increases occurred from 2015 until early 2022, when rising construction and material costs post-COVID prompted a long-range capital needs plan (completed July 2022) and a rate study (presented July 2023). The study indicated a 26% rate increase was needed, to be phased in with 7% increases over three years and 5% for one year. A 7% increase was implemented January 1, 2024, and a 10% increase on October 1, 2024. After the fiscal year 2023 audit and budget completion in September 2024, an updated rate study (presented March 25, 2025) led the council to propose further increases of 14% and 6% on the base rate, effective June 1 and October 1, 2025, respectively. Despite no rate hikes, system reliability improved, but at the cost of depleting reserves from \$10 million to \$3 million and

reducing general fund transfers, which help offset property taxes for residents and businesses, especially since a third of city parcels are non-taxable. The ordinance also addresses new development costs: the per-lot fee for developers, unchanged at \$1,300 from 2015 to 2024, increased to \$2,200 in October 2024 and is now proposed at \$2,600. Street and area light fees, last set in 2015, are updated with guidelines for LED lights, which use less electricity. The electric service connection fee, static at \$125 per meter since 2015, is proposed to rise to \$200. These measures aim to ensure new development pays for itself and support utility sustainability.

Navid Nowakhtar with FMPA reviews and updates information from the March presentation on the Leidos Engineering Rate Study, supported by the Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA), which represents 33 Florida municipalities, serving about 3 million residents (14% of the state). FMPA provides data to Leidos for the study, but retail rate decisions are made by member cities like Green Cove Springs. The study compares Green Cove Springs' residential electric rates (based on 1,000 kWh) to state investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and municipal averages, showing competitive rates. Variations in power cost adjustment (PCA) strategies and over-collection by some municipalities affect rate comparisons, with IOU rates regulated by the Public Service Commission. The study focuses on revenue sufficiency for system maintenance, reliability, personnel, and operations. It includes a financing plan for capital investments (e.g., transformers) to ensure cost causers pay their share. Reliability has improved significantly, with Green Cove Springs' System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI) falling below the municipal target of 60 minutes, driven by infrastructure upgrades and voltage conversion projects. However, the unrestricted net position has declined due to insufficient revenue, impacting the electric fund transfer that offsets property taxes and supports community services.

Mayor Kelley opens the public hearing.

The following individuals speak concerning the electric rate increase and oppose the increase:

Jerry Grissett 412 Pearl St. GCS

Charlie Stillings 1030 North St. GCS

Ron Price 3020 Five Oaks Ln. GCS

Mike Kelter 630 Myrtle Ave. GCS

Greg Will 218 N. Magnolia Ave. GCS

Susan Pritchett 218 N. Magnolia Ave. GCS

Troy Anderson 1577 Shedd Rd. GCS

Krissy Weeks 515 Myrtle Ave. GCS

Van Royal 3688 La Costa Ct. GCS reflects on the city's improvements, including Spring Park, utilities, and paved streets, recalling a time when many streets were unpaved. He has mixed feelings about changes but supported a proposed 22% electric rate increase. It is the City Council's responsibility to maintain utilities that support growth and quality of life. The electric system is well-managed, with funds effectively utilized, and while price increases are unpopular, it is necessary to sustain the improved infrastructure

Following no further comments, Mayor Kelley closes the public hearing.

Vice Mayor Smith advised that citizens are heard, and the Council is attentive during the designated three-minute period for public concerns. He advises he will reserve further comments for later.

Council Member Johnson acknowledged public concerns about rate hikes, stressing the Council is listening. Transformer prices have tripled, reserves are depleted, and consistent rate increases

should have been implemented earlier to maintain the system's high reliability. He recognized both affordability and reliability issues.

Council Member Butler thanked attendees for their participation and emphasized that they, too, are citizens facing tough decisions. She advised that after addressing stormwater and wastewater, the electrical system now needs attention and spoke highly of city management, highlighting the staff and data-driven studies.

Council Member Gaw spoke about the local government's performance over the past decade, stressing reliable delivery of services like water, sewer, stormwater, electric, and security. Mr. Gaw quoted Warren Buffett, they argue that while the price is what residents pay, the value lies in the enhanced services received and challenged the negative feedback by questioning whether residents prefer layoffs in the electrical department or reduced service quality. He stressed the need for a decision, advising the options of maintaining current value versus risking service reductions or quality of life.

Mayor Kelley acknowledged the discomfort of the current situation, addressing public criticism that rate increases are irresponsible or untrustworthy, arguing that past avoidance of rate hikes and interfund borrowing led to the current financial strain. He advises the council has shifted toward proactive, data-driven decisions to create sustainable revenue structures. To address affordability, he instructed staff to review how proposed rate increases (14% and 16%) can be applied disproportionately, prioritizing relief for vulnerable residential households (e.g., those using under 1,000 kilowatt-hours) over commercial or high-demand accounts, and to present this analysis by the next hearing.

Mr. Null advises there has been some misinformation mentioned on social media and during the meeting and invited the public to meet with staff directly to get accurate, detailed explanations about the issues and decisions being considered.

Mayor Kelley encourages the public to contact the council with questions or concerns before the second reading, offering to discuss details.

**Motion to approve on first reading as to form only Ordinance No. O-07-2025, to amend City Code Chapter 90, Article III, Electric Utility, and set May 20, 2025, at 6:00PM as the second and final reading.**

Motion made by Council Member Johnson, Seconded by Council Member Gaw.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

Voting Nay: Vice Mayor Smith

### CONSENT AGENDA

All matters under the consent agenda are considered to be routine by the city council and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed below. There will be no separate discussion on these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the consent agenda and will be considered separately. Backup documentation and staff recommendations have been previously submitted to the city council on these items.

Council Member Gaw pulled item 16 and 10 was pulled due to having a blue card.

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda items 9 through 20 minus 10 and 16.**

Motion made by Vice Mayor Smith, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

9. City Council approval of the following proclamations: **Erin West**  
National Safe Boating Week and Military Service Day
10. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-06-2025, supporting Executive Order 25-44 entitled Ensuring Government Efficiency. **Steve Kennedy**  

Mike Kelter 630 Myrtle Ave. GCS speaks about the importance of the Doge initiative, expressing its potential to enhance city functions through advanced digital and electronic review processes. He commended the city for adopting a resolution but urges a thorough approach. Mr. Kelter suggests involving citizens to leverage the city's talent for improving efficiency, rather than relying solely on the city council.
- Motion to approve Consent Agenda items 10 and 16.**  
Motion made by Council Member Butler, Seconded by Vice Mayor Smith.  
Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson
11. City Council approval of the Annual Memorial Day Riverfest Festival. **Michael Daniels**
12. City Council authorization for the Asst. Water Utilities Director to execute the Utility Work by Highway Contractor Agreement, and approval of funding in the amount of \$44,880.00, for the FDOT paving contractor to adjust manholes and valve jackets as part of the repaving of State Road 16. **Scott Schultz**
13. City Council approval of 2025 Evans Media Entertainment Agreement. **Kimberly Thomas**
14. City Council approval of Minutes. **Erin West**  
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15. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-07-2025, a resolution authorizing Amendment No. 9 to the FDOT Traffic Signal Maintenance and Compensation Agreement, Contract No. ARV47, for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, in the amount of \$42,244.00 and authorizing the City Manager to execute said Agreement. **Greg Bauer**
16. City Council approval of funding in the amount of \$304,404.91 to Irby for electric transformers used in the Rookery project and \$184,755.00 to Irby for electric transformer inventory for operating and capital projects. **Sue Wang**

Council Member Gaw asks Electric Director Andy Yeager to speak on this item.

Electric Director Andy Yeager advised the next phase of the Rookery project is fully funded by rookery-specific funds, not city lot fee revenue. He also mentioned that new businesses are coming to town, and transformers have been pre-ordered due to long lead times, the costs will be reimbursed to the city.

Council Member Gaw asks if it is safe to say that as the city continues to grow, the electrical demands become more complex, and the inventory is increasing three times.

Mr. Yeager stresses the importance of proactive planning due to long lead times for critical infrastructure like transformers, using the example of a fire station. As soon as the fire station's voltage and amperage needs were known, a transformer was ordered to avoid delays that could have postponed electricity setup by months. This foresight ensured Station 20 was nearly ready, pending one final requirement. He advised that businesses reimburse transformer costs through fees, which are returned to city funds. Acting early is critical to avoid delays that could reflect poorly on the department or council, especially for essential services like fire suppression.

Mayor Kelley acknowledges the expertise and reliability of Mr. Yeager's team in managing the electrical department, particularly in preparing for critical infrastructure like the new public safety fire response building. He asks what specific improvements—such as replacing two 45-year-old transformers, upgrading the 23 KV system, relocating the Chapman substation, or building a new electric department facility—mean for the department.

Mr. Yeager discussed the urgent need to replace the aging electrical infrastructure, starting with the Chapman substation's transformer, which is 47 years old, well beyond its 30–35-year lifespan. A newer transformer currently supports the entire city's load, but reliance on the outdated one as a backup is risky and unsustainable. He explained the need for proactive replacement to avoid future failures. Regarding the 23 KV system upgrade, the department is converting to higher voltage in-house to save costs, starting at the north end of town due to voltage push challenges and city growth. Higher voltage reduces amperage, easing transformer load. Older transformers at North and South Substations require maintenance that risks outages, so converting to new voltage allows for reliable backups. Mr. Yeager praised his team's dedication, noting their efficiency and enthusiasm despite a demanding workload.

City Manager Steve Kennedy supports Andy's explanation of the decisions involved in managing the city's electrical infrastructure, stressing that the detailed information provided should justify the actions proposed.

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda items 10 and 16.**

Motion made by Vice Mayor Smith, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

17. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-08-2025, authorizing the submission of an application for the small cities Community Development Block Grant to Florida Commerce for federal fiscal year 2023-2024. **Mike Null**
18. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-09-2025, authorizing the use of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) of the City of Green Cove Springs funding as leverage for the small cities neighborhood revitalization Community Development Block Grant application. **Mike Null**
19. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-10-2025, authorizing the implementation of the long term and short-term objectives of the City of Green Cove Springs Community Development Plan. **Mike Null**
20. City Council approval of Pay Application #1 for the Bayard Stormwater Improvements to DB Civil Construction in the amount of \$282,361.13. **Greg Bauer**

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## COUNCIL BUSINESS

### 21. Review of a Site Development Plan for the Preserve at Green Cove Springs, a 260 Unit Multi-Family Residential Complex. *Michael Daniels*

Development Service Michael Daniels presented.

John Cattano, with Portage Real Estate advised he is one of the developers and owners of the property. Mr. Cattano expressed excitement about returning after three years to present a proposed 260-unit community near the First Coast Expressway. He highlighted the project's high-quality features, including 9-foot ceilings, granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, and upscale interiors, as well as a 2,000-square-foot pool, clubhouse, pickleball courts, electric charging stations, and a pet washroom.

Van Royal 3688 La Costa Ct. GCS speaks about concerns for the proposed 260-unit apartment complex's location at the intersection of 209 and 17. He emphasized that apartments meet a real need for short-term residents. Mr. Royal speaks about traffic flow and suggests that many residents will head to the interstate. He mentioned nearby Governor's Park development which will include 300 homes and future commercial amenities like Home Depot and Publix, accessible via the Green Cove Springs bypass or Springbank Road.

Joe Sobotta 212 North St. GCS expressed frustration about the growth and annexation in Green Cove Springs, questioning how it benefits long-term residents like him, who have lived there since 2009. He advised there is a 37% property tax increase, rising costs for utilities, and the need for more police and services due to growth, but argue they see no tangible benefits like new stores. He values the town's small-town charm and opposes further population growth, believing it strains resources and raises costs for long-time residents without clear advantages.

Mayor Kelley addressed concerns about the lack of visible benefits from city growth, acknowledging that significant developments are still emerging but will soon impact tax rolls positively, helping offset growth costs. He advises the proposed apartment complex is needed as it addresses the critical need for affordable housing, which benefits local workers, and generates revenue through impact fees, unlike external developments.

Jim Darling 3469 Oglebay Dr. GCS acknowledges the concerns of long-term residents (20-30 years) about rising taxes due to new infrastructure costs at current prices. While preferring a small city with capped taxes, the speaker recognizes this isn't feasible for funding updates.

Vice Mayor Smith notes that Ms. Hall called them today and he just wanted to put it on record. He approves of the site plan for the proposed project, appreciating the inclusion of a courtyard and the effort to save trees despite cost constraints, calling it a thoughtful and conservative approach to development.

Mayor Kelley showed appreciation for the proposed 260-unit apartment complex, having digitally toured the developer's other high-quality communities in South Carolina and Flagler Beach. He asked Mr. Daniels whether the city should consider implementing a park impact fee to fund additional parks, as the current ones are insufficient to serve all children adequately, and future contributions need to be increased to meet the city's growing needs.

Mr. Daniels discusses plans to develop a Parks Master Plan by applying for a state technical assistance grant, expected to be available within the next one to two months. The plan will build

on a 2022 inventory from the comprehensive plan, identifying needed park improvements to raise service levels and assessing impacts to inform development-related fees.

Mayor Kelley asks about tree mitigation.

Mr. Daniels explains that the high tree mitigation fee for the 260-unit apartment project on 13 acres is due to the site's dense tree coverage, making it challenging to meet tree preservation requirements while saving quality trees that can withstand development.

City Manager Steve Kennedy regrets that some attendees left before hearing key comments but outlines the approach to the proposed electric rate increase, comparing it to past water and sewer rate adjustments. Initially high rates were reduced as progress was made, including a year with no increase.

Mark Scruby 2321 Egremont Dr. Orange Park expresses gratitude on behalf of the Hall family for the council's perseverance in pursuing a fair outcome. Without growth, infrastructure replacement costs burden existing residents, as cities cannot achieve economies of scale to spread costs.

**Motion to approve the site development plan of the Preserve at Green Cove Springs.**

Motion made by Council Member Johnson, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

Mark Scrubby Orange Park speaks

22. City Council approval of taking title to the road known as Washington Lane pursuant to Sec 95.361, Florida Statutes. ***City Attorney Arnold***

City Attorney Arnold speaks on Washinton Lane, item 22, and Chapel Road, item 23 and explains the process by which Green Cove Springs can claim ownership of roads, such as Washington Lane and Chapel Street, based on historical plats and long-term maintenance. Florida law allows the city to claim ownership of roads it has maintained for four years (if built by the city) or seven years (regardless of who built it) without compensation, as public funds have been invested for public benefit. The city is formalizing ownership of these two roads through a statutory process, which includes recording the action with the clerk of the court and notifying the tax assessor to adjust property records. Mr. Arnold advises that property owner Joe Wiggins, primarily affected by Chapel Street, was informed and raised no objections.

Council Member Butler questions how it was discovered the City did not hold title.

Mr. Arnold advises Washinton Lane has been around awhile and was brought to his attention while Chapel Road was brought to him by Development Services Michael Daniels.

Council Member Butler advises that Washington Lane goes from Walburg to MLK and then MLK to Center and questions which portion needs to be titles to the City.

Mr. Arnold advises Walburg to MLK.

**Motion to approve taking title to the road known as Washington Lane pursuant to Sec 95.361, Florida Statutes.**

Motion made by Vice Mayor Smith, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

23. City Council approval of taking title to the road known as Chapel Road pursuant to Sec 95.361, Florida Statutes. *City Attorney Arnold*

**Motion to approve taking title to the road known as Chapel Road pursuant to Sec 95.361, Florida Statutes.**

Motion made by Council Member Butler, Seconded by Vice Mayor Smith.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

24. City Manager & City Attorney Reports / Correspondence

The City Manager and City Attorney made comments regarding various city activities, events, operations, and projects.

25. City Council Reports / Correspondence

The City Council made comments regarding various city activities, events, operations, and projects.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

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Steven R. Kelley, Mayor

Attest:

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Erin West, City Clerk