



## MINUTES

### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR WORKSHOP MEETING JANUARY 22, 2025 6:00 p.m.

The City of Madeira Beach Board of Commissioners held a regular workshop meeting at 6:00 p.m. on January 22, 2025, in the Patricia Shontz Commission Chambers at City Hall, located at 300 Municipal Drive, Madeira Beach, Florida.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor  
David Tagliarini, Vice Mayor/Commissioner District 1  
Ray Kerr, Commissioner District 2  
Eddie McGeehen, Commissioner District 3  
Housh Ghovae, Commissioner District 4

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**CHARTER OFFICERS PRESENT:** Robin Gomez, City Manager  
Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk  
Andrew Laflin, Finance Director, City Treasurer  
Thomas Trask, City Attorney

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Brooks called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

#### 2. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Clara VanBlargan called the roll. All were present.

#### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

Mayor Brooks asked that the items in #6 be discussed before those in #5. The Board consented.

#### 4. CITY ATTORNEY

##### A. Ordinance 2025-07 Minimum Age for Adult Use Establishments F.S. 787.30

The City Attorney explained the item. During the last session, the Florida legislature created a new statute (FS 787.30) that requires the City to create Section 110-841 of the Land Development Code. More specifically, the statute sets the minimum age for employment at adult use establishments at

21 years of age as of January 1. In that regard, we need to create an ordinance to address it. As a direct result of that change, updating the City's code would be appropriate. Ordinance 2025-07 was created for the specific purpose of addressing that State Statute. In addition to that requirement, he added some language similar to what other cities are doing around the State. That is to ensure that no one under 18 is in the adult entertainment establishment, no one can remain if they are under 18 in that establishment, and no one under 18 is allowed to purchase goods or services in that establishment. It is a housekeeping ordinance to come in compliance with the State Statute.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini asked for confirmation that there is no adult establishment currently on the barrier island and that it was for moving forward. The City Attorney said he did not have an answer to the question.

Commissioner Kerr asked if they could prohibit an adult entertainment establishment, and the City Attorney said no.

## **6. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The Community Development items were discussed before those in #5.

### **A. Post Hurricane Update – Recovery, Rebuild, Permitting, FEMA, FDEM**

The City Manager thanked the staff and said they are looking to get the City looking better than before and getting people back into their homes and businesses. They continue to provide in-person hours two days a week and two Saturdays a month. They continue to produce data on the number of permits and substantial determinations and post them on the City's website and Facebook page. About 1,900 determinations have been issued. They received over 1,700 applications and, issued over 1,000 residential and commercial permits, and to post them at least weekly on the City's website and Facebook page.

Marci Forbes, Community Development Engineer, said they continue sending out determination letters daily depending on the data they need and have several hundred more to go. Most of those go to people who were not necessarily impacted and have post-fire homes and others who have not yet decided to tear down or elevate their structures. They continue doing the SD determinations with City staff to be calculated and issued. They also do other things that are necessary to help in the process. They are getting support from the workforce group offsite. They have been sending them appraisals for review, which they have reviewed about 104; 75 percent of those passed without issues, and 25 percent came back with minor comments. Those are sent back to the applicant for correction by the appraiser. They are also starting to intake cost estimates and helping to review those.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment.

Yarisi Valero, resident, shared her experience with the permitting:

- She submitted a demolition permit on October 17, 2024, and received a document to move forward with the demolition. She did not receive notice that the document had been sent until she discovered it a few weeks later.
- The demolition moved forward on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and she submitted the requested pictures to the City and received a notice of acceptance on November 18.
- She came into the City on November 18 for assistance with the documents and was told she had to wait until she received the substantial damage determination letter before moving forward to do anything. On January 3, she received the letter.
- She had already paid for a FEMA-certified private appraisal. It was uploaded to her permit on November 15.
- The substantial damage determination letter was received on January 3. It said her home had been substantially damaged.
- On January 3, she requested a copy of the worksheet showing how the determination was done. Because the information was not received, she sent an email on January 7 and January 13 asking for the details of the determination to be sent to her. To date, that information has not been received.
- On January 17, she received a review of her cash value appraisal. It said it had to be corrected. It was corrected that same day.
- The insurance claim was final the week before Christmas. She received a check, and everything was lined up. To her knowledge, she has not received notice from the City that anything else is needed.

Ms. Valero said they need a timeline. She would like to know how much longer she must pay the mortgage and not be able to live in her home. She needs permits to move forward. If the City continues at that pace, it will be hurricane season again, and nothing will be done.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini asked Ms. Forbes if they had prepared a detail on how the substantial damage was determined. Ms. Forbes said they have the data report to provide to people if it is done in-house. Originally, the sub-consultants would give the details, but now only the percentage is available, which is a large elemental viewpoint. She asks people to provide the substantial damage breakdown with the cost of returning their home to its pre-storm condition.

Commissioner Kerr recalled from a previous meeting that the independent appraisals received need to be in a certain format to be approved by FEMA. Ms. Forbes said it must be in ACV format with the information specifically asked for to be accepted. The process is much faster. Once they get the appraisal, they can review it, supply the data, and immediately apply it to the determination and reverse the determination. They then submit the determination based on the new data received from the ACV appraisal. Everyone participates in every phase because they have so many different things and phases. They now have checks and balances in place to prevent what Ms. Valero is experiencing, which is disappointing. They have new permitting software that has never been utilized in that capacity. Last Thursday, they were shown the permitting process that Pinellas County uses, and it was helpful.

Commissioner Kerr said communication is the key and asked if anyone on staff was responding to emails, someone other than those reviewing everything. It is frustrating on both sides. He

encourages everyone to come in and talk about their case. Ms. Forbes said the emails and phone calls have been the most difficult, but someone is communicating back to them. They have been working together as a team on it. It isn't easy to keep up with the work and the back-and-forth day-to-day communications. They are going to a more robust permitting process. Someone can come in and walk out with a permit. They have much more data and are further along in the process. Hopefully, they will start providing those services next week. The information will be posted on the website to the residents.

Commissioner Ghovae asked about the many hours staff work each week to get things done. Marci said some staff members work over 40 hours weekly to help with the process.

Commissioner McGeehen asked about the support from the county. Ms. Forbes explained that the support has been helpful. Next time, they will be better prepared for permitting and collecting data.

Mayor Brooks said they did not have a playbook to go by after Hurricane Helene. Marci has been a great help. At every meeting, they learn new things about what the staff is doing.

The City Manager said he would ensure every phone call and email was returned as quickly as possible.

## **B. Rebuilding Madeira Beach**

Justin Keller with Advanced Engineering said that at the last meeting, they shared their findings for the watershed management plan and a little about the nuts and bolts of how they prepare the plan, and they got into much discussion. They talked about the strategic utilization of fill, bringing in earth to elevate structures and roads. Based upon feedback from the Commission and some additional discussions with staff, they produced the proposal the Commission has before them. They can start working with the City on some of the big challenges ahead when approved. It gives a breakdown of some immediate tasks they see as an added benefit. The overall tone of the proposal is support. They want to support the City in the plan review, standardizing some of the construction details and other items to develop standards and move forward. They want to do a detailed assessment of what would be needed to support future endeavors and resiliency initiatives the City may want to pursue later. It is not a commitment to picking a path but to support the City in immediate challenges likely to be faced during the rebuild and to provide a clearer picture of what some of the options may look like from a big-picture standpoint moving forward.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Ghovae said at the last meeting, Justin had recommended that the minimum parking garage be at 7.2. They have a roadway at 5 or 4 and would have to slope up very steeply to get to the parking. It would be a good idea to raise some of the roadways if it does not adversely affect other units remaining at the lower elevation.

Mr. Keller said it is a challenge. Any time they talk about any resiliency and what a coastal community will face, moving forward would be a challenge. Part of what they want to establish within the framework before the Commission are the goals, expectations, and a reasonable run to

reach for as far as some of the roadway elevations and garage elevations. They want to prepare that and come back with formal recommendations. They have looked at a 5-1/2 for a roadway. Without overthinking it, they want to recommend the current framework there. They would need a more programmatic approach to elevating structures and roadways as they continue to pursue capital improvement projects and such. No one wants to drive up a 40-to-45-degree incline to get to their structure.

Commissioner Kerr said Robin gave them the proposal before the meeting. He envisions them sitting down with staff and the Commissioners to create a plan they would agree to vote on and then present it to the public for feedback. They would have a better understanding of how they want to move forward. Once they vote, it will become part of their comprehensive plan. Mr. Keller said there is also a plan review element to it. There is an opportunity to work with residents and plan reviews to see if they can maximize any opportunities in front of them to utilize fill in any rebuild. They want to ensure that everything they do speaks to all the other documents, such as the strategic plan, master plan, and comprehensive plan. If something does not support that document's intent, they must revise it or the program. The kickoff would be to align everybody on what they need to do to unify everything.

Commissioner Kerr said the proposal outlines the number of hours for each phase. Would that be locked in? Mr. Keller said they noted that some of them are time and materials. They will only bill the actual time. They need to figure out the game plan moving forward if starting to go over. There will be no surprises. For phase one end product, the City will get standard details and a breakdown of what they think the goals should be for a program if the City would want to pursue it, and what they would need to do from a comprehensive plan, strategic plan, master plan, and LDRs aspect to accomplish those goals. It is a sense of phase one, recognizing that they are coming in with a lot of momentum based on what they have been through. Also, the hours cover support services for other terrain-type adjacent support tasks.

Commissioner Kerr asked how many new builds or elevation permits they had approved. Ms. Forbs said about three or four since the storm.

Commissioner Kerr said that when elevating a home or building a new home and not thinking about what is being discussed now, the lowest elevation may not be at the top of the mind. Other things are on the residents' minds, and they might miss a huge opportunity to get the lowest level to a goal where they can raise the roads. It is all about raising the roads.

Mr. Keller said that is why they are there; it all sort of spurred out of the watershed management plan. So, not only are they coming with the knowledge they have from prior fill programs. The City is working with Pinellas County to do the vulnerability assessment, which is a requirement. That usually is a planning grant given with a 0% match. To look competitive and purposeful in your actions, having a program or a plan in place for a larger effort will be critical because you would not be the coastal community fighting for those dollars.

Ms. Forbes said that effort is always directed toward the bigger picture so it does not delay their final goal. It is just the first bite of it.

Mayor Brooks asked if the proposal cost was budgeted. Community Development Director Jenny Rowan said it was not budgeted. The Mayor said she wants to know where the money comes from. The City Manager said it would be coming from the stormwater fund. There are reserves there from last year. They will bring it with the budget at mid-year. The Mayor said they are being asked to approve the money before knowing where it is coming from. They need to know if the money is there and not needed somewhere else. Because of the hurricane and the reduction in funds, it would be important for the community to understand that they have the dollars in the budget or in the reserves, and those monies will be there and will not be needed elsewhere. It would have to be paid for.

Commissioner Ghovae suggested that before moving forward with the plan, they might need to vote to ensure that any parking garage's minimum elevation is 7.2. They could do that now. If not, as they move forward, they will not achieve their goals. If they vote on it, Marci can administer that if the minimum elevation for a garage is 7.2. As they require higher ground, they may also need to give some buildings a bit of a height credit.

Mayor Brooks said the Commissioner is saying they could pass an ordinance requiring the height to be what Commissioner Ghovae stated so they would capture that in the houses built before the study is finished and implemented. She asked if that would be reasonable.

Ms. Forbes said that would not be their goal right now. What they are doing now is to figure out what that number would be. Putting it into ordinance form is not what they want to do at this stage. It is trying to work within their framework, what they can do, where they can go, and what that would look like. If it does become 7.2, then it will be based on the experience and the analysis. Mr. Keller said there could be places where they cannot meet that elevation, so part of their vision would be to work with the City by leveraging some of what they have done in the past and creating a cookbook on how to do it. They provide a standardized set of instructions for designers and builders to follow their desired goals.

Chuck Dillion, a resident, explained how he thought the elevation of 7.2 would not work for him. If implemented, it might hamstring people even further. It must go through the building process. The streets are already done. They just spent millions of dollars doing Crystal Island. In District One, the streets are all done. Ray (Commissioner Kerr) had talked about buying the properties on Flamingo and elevating them before the roads were done. A year ago, the elevation of 7.2 would have been good. Now, with the catastrophe, it is too late.

### **C. Mulch**

Community Director Rowan said there had been discussion about amending their LDRs to restrict mulch. She added the Florida Statutes to the meeting packet, discussing Florida-friendly landscaping. It states that a local government ordinance may not prohibit or be enforced to prohibit any property owner from implementing Florida-friendly landscaping on his or her property. They are restricted on what they can restrict in the LDRs.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Mayor Brooks said a resident mentioned the issue. When it had come up, the conversation was centered on that wood mulch washes away and floats away. Her question would be if mulch were defined as wood or what the definition of mulch is.

Commissioner Ghovae said he would also like to know about rubber mulch. The Mayor said that would be a better alternative than wood. Shell cannot be restricted because of the word mulch used in the Florida Statute. Director Rowan said that is how she would read it unless Tom says otherwise.

Commissioner Ghovae said pine mulch attracts bugs. Cypress mulch is the best; however, it is expensive and floats. Rubber is often used where there is water.

Commissioner Kerr asked if it could not be prohibited and if they could require adhesion to be applied to prevent it from running off. There are spray-on products to hold it in place. Director Rowan said there is glue that could be sprayed on. They could look further into it. She would not know how it would be enforced.

Mayor Brooks said the conversation was centered around whether you have wood mulch and they have a storm, which washes away, gets into the drains, and clogs them. It creates a lot of issues. They are a barrier island, and the intent was to determine whether they could implement something more friendly to drainage systems. Flooding occurs a lot in the City. Because a resident had brought it up, they could better understand whether they could require an adhesive to keep it from floating away. Could they define mulch as being not wood?

The City Attorney said the State Statute says mulching. They do not get to decide what the legislature thinks the definition of mulching is. The key to the whole statute was created years ago to create Florida-friendly landscaping. It was to allow certain types of plants to maintain water consistency and moisture. Whether it is paper, cardboard, wood, rubber, or anything that floats, it could be considered mulch, and it will be permitted. A better approach would be to get their legislative delegation to add an exception to the statute for coastal communities or those within a mile or two miles of the coast. It could be added to the definition in the statute. That would give the right to prohibit it.

Mayor Brooks said that would be a fantastic idea. If they only had a lobbyist that could do that for them.

Commissioner Ghovae said the process would be time-consuming. He has no problem with rubber mulching.

Commissioner McGeehen said he had a problem with mulch. Every time they have a storm, the mulch prohibits water flow, especially when the water is heading from the west to the east in the community. The attorney's suggestion is a great idea. They could also encourage the neighbors not to use wood chips.

#### **D. Ordinance 2025-05 Temporary Shelters on Residential Property**

Director Rowan said Florida Statute 166.0335 prohibits municipalities from prohibiting one temporary shelter on residential property after the Governor issues a declaration of state of emergency. They met with the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM). They reviewed the City's floodplain ordinances and asked that the City update them by acknowledging the Florida Statute. So, it is placing that into the City's LDR and in the FIP requirements. They would combine the two requirements and amend a section of the City's code.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini said he would oppose banning temporary shelters on residential property while people renovate and live in them. They could pose a reasonable time limit because people are still waiting for permits and appraisals. He would not think two years would be excessive. Mayor Brooks said it says 36 months. The Vice Mayor said he would go with 36 months. Director Rowan noted that it is in the Florida Statutes.

Commissioner Ghovae asked if they could put a limit on it later down the road as they progress through the season and reconstruction.

Mayor Brooks said they pulled it straight out of the Florida Statute. The 36 months is how long someone can have temporary housing on the property and live in it. If remodeling, they have 36 months. Commissioner Ghovae said they could, but he would not know the financial aspects during the hurricane season.

Director Rowan read the Florida Statute in the packet on page 136. It states that a municipality may not prohibit the placement of one temporary shelter on the residential property for up to 36 months after the declaration date or until a certificate of occupancy is issued on the permanent residential structure on the property.

Mayor Brooks said she would not have a problem with it.

#### **E. Ordinance 2025-04 Planned Development**

Director Rowan said the ordinance is a version of Ordinance 2024-18, planned development, that went before the Planning Commission in September. There are a few similar changes in other planned development ordinances, which are as follows:

- The changes include grammatical changes throughout the ordinance, including how it flows.
- It includes the projects being the initial review, and they will gain further details throughout the process.
- It includes the addition of stepbacks within the setbacks in flexibility.
- The PDs in the traditional village commercial core boardwalk and low-intensity mixed-use character districts within the John's Pass Village Activity cannot exceed the height limitations within the development standards.
- It includes additional information on the PD narrative and why the project requests flexibility in the zoning district's land development regulations before rezoning to PD.



- It includes the impact of neighboring properties in the use and development pattern.
- The City Clerk and Community Development Department are added to the list to receive the required neighborhood meeting mailers.
- The sidewalk width changed to 10 ft wide, and the BOC can reduce the width if there are any limitations.
- It includes clarifications on the changes to the development plan that do not need BOC approval.
- They added a second sentence to Sec. 110-396 to clarify what a minor modification is.

Commissioner Ghovae said at the bottom of page 149 there is a reference to ingress and egress that does not have to come before the city council, but the curb cut does. He asked about the difference between an ingress, egress, and curb cut. Director Rowan said they are asking for a zoning change to the development. The entrance may change slightly if they do not have the interior layouts. They would not want to go back before the BOC to open the entire project again just to change where the front door may be. If it is large enough, a change might alter the curb cuts or sidewalks. That might be a different level and would go before the BOC for approval. The ingress and egress would be the entrance doors and more like internal to the building. If it were the driveway, it would be like that minor modification, and it would go before the BOC for approval.

Director Rowan said they will take it to the Planning Commission for discussion and recommendation in February.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

#### **F. Ordinance 2025-06 Amendment to Capital Improvement Element of Comprehensive Plan**

Director Rowan said the ordinance updates the comprehensive plan to include the CIP that the Board voted on in October since they did not have Planning Commission meetings. It is something they do every year.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

### **5. CITY MANAGER**

The City Manager items were discussed after the Community Development items in #6.

#### **A. Military Court of Honor**

The City Manager said the item has been a capital project going on for two years and is looking to complete it. The engineering plans in the packet are almost complete. The Court of Honor will be located at Patriot Park just west of the 911 Memorial, in the area currently occupied by a kiosk. They want to have the design details over the next few weeks and then issue an invitation to bid, hopefully no later than March.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Kerr said he thought it looked good.

Commissioner Ghovae recommended increasing the width of the sidewalk to 10 feet or matching what is there now on Tom Stuart Causeway. The plans currently show five feet and the right-of-way. And consider raising the elevation a little based on what they have experienced.

The City Manager said they are looking at lighting at Patriot Park. They are looking at alternative components for the lighting so it does not get destroyed and what would be best in that area. It has flooded there a couple of times. Director Wepfer said the elevation at Patriot Park is extremely low, so the water comes over the seawall on a good high tide. They lost all the electricity there due to Hurricane Helene. Most had been repaired before putting in the Christmas tree. All the lights along the seawall must be replaced. They are not repairable anymore due to all the flooding.

Commissioner Ghovae said he did not want to take credit. Before joining the Commission, he contributed \$1,000 towards the project. It is \$26,000. The City Manager apologized and said it was \$26,000. They have \$25,000 from the American Legion and \$1,000 from Northside Engineering (the company owned by Commissioner Ghovae).

Mayor Brooks said they had the money for two years. It has not been a priority, and she would like it to be. Whatever decision they make or whatever they do, it is time to make it a priority to move it forward and get it done. The community supported it, and \$26,000 in donations have been received.

### **B. Saltwater Destination Beach Concession Agreement – 2<sup>nd</sup> Agreement**

The City Manager said the City has an agreement to have a Beach Equipment Concession Agreement with Saltwater Destinations LLC to provide beach chairs and umbrella rentals to the visitors at Archibald Park for five years, with one additional five-year renewal. Saltwater has requested to extend the Agreement with no changes for the additional five-year period ending in October 2029. The chairs and umbrellas are available to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. when the weather is a little sunnier.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

The Board commented in favor of extending the Agreement for an additional five-year period.

Commissioner Ghovae received confirmation there was insurance coverage.

Commissioner Ghovae asked if the five-year extension would affect what they may do to Archibald Park. The City Manager said no. A little over a year ago, the vendor was extremely amendable and cooperative when restoring the sand dunes. They are pleasant to work with and ambassadors to the City for all the visitors who enjoy going out on the sand.

### **C. Tampa Bay Psychology Associates Services Agreement**

The City Manager said they have an agreement with Tampa Bay Psychology Associates to provide one individual counseling session for the Madeira Beach fire personnel. The vendor previously provided the service for free. It was paid for as part of a grant that ended. They are requesting to continue the service. It is valuable and beneficial to the fire personnel, their work, and their encounters throughout the day. It is recommended that the Board approves the Agreement at a future meeting. It would entail that a one-hour session would be \$165.00. There is money in the fire budget for that, and some fire personnel have used the service. They would not know if the usage would increase, but they will monitor it because it will impact the Fire Department budget.

Fire Chief Clint Belk said he looked into whether they would take the City's insurance, and they do not. They have a petition form to complete and send to the insurance company for partial reimbursement. The grant that paid for the services was not renewed.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini said those services are provided by the City's health insurance provider and asked if they could do research to see if any of the recommended providers on their list also deal with the specific subjects. He is not suggesting that they do not provide the service, but he would like it looked into with the City's insurance provider. He wants to make sure they are not paying double for the service. Chief Belk said he would research and bring the information back to the Board before the vote. He wants to keep it going for the two employees who took advantage of it when the grant paid for it.

Commissioner Kerr said he would support it, but they would need to monitor it. He would not want it to be used by too many individuals. Other than that, he supports it.

Commissioner McGeehen and Commissioner Ghovae commented in support of the program.

Commissioner Ghovae asked if they needed to get three bids. The City Attorney said they did not. It is such a small procurement effort.

#### **D. HR, Classification, & Compensation Plans Study Update**

The City Manager said in July 2024, the Commission approved an agreement with the RSC Insurance Brokerage, Inc., dba Risk Strategies Company (Gehring Group) to perform a human resources compensation and classification plan study mainly to look at and evaluate existing positions for a variety of components such as comparisons with salaries, how they compare with other cities, look at their job classifications to make sure that positions are appropriately classified, ensure that positions are appropriately classified as exempt or non-exempt, meaning that they are hourly subject to overtime or salaried. They tried to get someone from the Gehring Group to give the presentation at the meeting, but they did provide an update on the study that should be concluded next month. They will give an in-person presentation at the Civil Service Commission meeting next week (January 29 at 4 p.m.).

The City Manager said that the Gehring Group has been looking at salary comparisons and provided the update they have now. They completed an overall assessment of approximately 27 job descriptions out of the City's 81 employees. They defined and obtained looking at salary comparisons with some comparable cities such as Treasure Island, Belleair Bluffs, Dunedin, Seminole, Tarpon Springs, and Clearwater. They will present the charts of their findings by actual job classification as they are listed, beginning with the Building Official, Code Compliance, and City Clerk. They will provide more details about all the positions listed on the three pages. Not every position does the same type of work across every City, and different job classifications will perform different tasks. They are trying to determine where the City of Madeira Beach's positions are relative to the other cities. Once they complete the benchmarking with other cities, they will get the data review and findings. They will then look at the pay grades and determine what changes need to be made or whether they have any compressions to adjust. They will complete the job descriptions and decide whether or not they are exempt or non-exempt to ensure the City follows the Fair Labor Standards Act. They will receive an update at the Civil Service Commission meeting next week. They have confirmed they will be at the February workshop, and he is also trying to get them to attend the regular meeting.

The City Manager said the budget is "not to exceed" \$37,000 to complete the study.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Ghovae asked if there was a way to compare the salaries to other cities in the area. The City Manager said they would provide that.

Mayor Brooks said she had requested a copy of the surveys submitted to understand what was requested. Out of the 81 employees, only 27 completed the survey, but one is completely blank, so that is 26 submitted. What she had thought they were going to get in the study is that they were going to come and sit with employees and talk about their job duties and that it was going to be requested, not that it was mandatory but the benefit of each employee submitting what their job description is, not what is written on the paper when they are hired but what their actual job duties are. So, they could compare their actual duties and whether an employee is doing more than their job description and should be paid more. It does not look like the information they got back from any employee. She would like to know if what was provided by the employees was requested appropriately to determine how to write the job descriptions. The City Manager said it was an emailed survey. Only 26 employees completed it. They have an email address for everybody and encourage them to use their email. They will discuss that with the company.

Mayor Brooks said that from an outsider looking in, it does not look like enough information was provided in the study to determine whether the employee is doing the job listed in their job description or doing more. That was her observation from the information she read.

Commissioner McGeehen agreed with the Mayor and said he understood they would come to the City and have a face-to-face interview with each employee and do the job description based on what the employee actually does, especially at the cost of \$37,000 and some change. They did not expect it to be an email. He would like a follow-up brought back to them.

Jerry Cantrell, chair of the Civil Service Commission, said the Civil Service Commission met with the Board of Commissioners and asked if they could speak to the Gehring Group so they would understand what the Civil Service Commission requested them to do. What was provided was not what they asked for. Something does not feel right; only 26 employees completed the survey. They were asked to do it in person. What happened was not appropriate.

The City Manager said they have not completed the study and will still have more meetings and opportunities to complete everything as requested.

#### **E. City Information Dissemination**

The City Manager said in the packet there is a list of various methods the City has utilized and continues distributing information. He read the list. They are looking at enhancing or looking at alternative methods, such as enhancing the City's website. They are looking at how they disseminate and the timeliness to ensure the content is correct, clear, and concise. The software used to send out information is important, especially through the permitting process. Anybody can receive the information through any electronic device. They are also looking to send communications via texting. Other cities do that.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Kerr thanked the City Manager for providing the information. He was unaware that the City had so many different avenues, and he would be interested in a text notification to push information out.

Mayor Brooks said text messaging would have been great during post-storms because people did not have internet. They were not on the computer looking at the website. It is beneficial for getting text messages because almost everyone has a cell phone. She does not use the Nextdoor app but signed up to see what Madeira Beach posts there. She could not find any post made by Madeira Beach on Nextdoor. There is some glitch there. They have a lot of avenues, but text messaging would be great.

#### **F. City Web/Internet Site**

The City Manager reviewed the item. The City provides a considerable amount of City service information on its website. They are the only City in Pinellas County that utilized ProudCity, their current website vendor, since at least 2021. It has been about four or five years since the redesign of the City's website; five years is the average for the cities looking to redesign their website. City websites have an inordinate amount of information. The information is different for each department. He reached out to four website vendors on how to improve. Doing a complete redesign could range between \$15,000 to \$25,000. There are a couple of firms used by some cities that provide a per-hour consulting fee to provide some guidance, such as making sure the search is an actual accurate search and scrubbing the hundreds and hundreds or thousands of pages that they have to make sure they are still relevant and not outdated. There are components they can do internally. They are getting to the point of looking at doing a complete redesign of the website. There are a couple of quotes in the packet. They can make some enhancements to make sure the

website is updated. Each department updates the website. His office is also the main point for keeping the site updated. They will continue to do that but take it to another level to ensure it is updated.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini said he likes the website for the most part and feels that it is laid out well. There are a couple of things he would like to see tweaked. They were more intuitive, but he does not think they need a new website. He would be supportive of hiring a consultant to come in and help the City achieve its goals. To find that out, they need to talk to the different departments, residents, and the Board to find out what areas they would like to improve and then hire a consultant to tweak the current platform. Many people know how to navigate the City's website already, so it will not change drastically.

Commissioner Kerr said he would rather put their resources and time into other things, such as the presentation they had earlier for now. The website is great. No matter what you do, there is always something to tweak.

Commissioner Ghovae said he would support some minor tweaking. There is information that is missing and some that is difficult to find, such as Municode, a powerful tool.

Commissioner McGeehen said it could be some minor tweaking. They must save their money right now.

Mayor Brooks said she mentioned the website because post-storms had more phone calls and communication from residents who could not find the information they needed. She does not know if they need a new website, but the website does not provide information in a friendly manner that people can get. It is difficult for her to find information on the website. If she cannot find it, how can anybody else find it? She does not know the proper process to coordinate to get a better method of delivery of information, but they need to do some tweaking for information. Hurricane Helene showed that. There is a lot of outdated information on the website. She does not advocate spending too much money but advocates for the residents to get better information. The City Manager agreed that locating information on the website should be much easier.

Mayor Brooks said that they are learning what they can do better due to the hurricanes, which is helpful. It is not meant to be criticism. It is what the community said they want the City to do better for them, not for the next storm but for tomorrow in general.

## **G. Grant Writing**

The City Manager said he had communicated with various organizations or partners, such as the Florida League of Cities and some of their engineers who provide grant writing services. The City staff have looked for grants and continue to do that.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Kerr said grant writing is an art; you must know what you are doing, and it could be time-consuming. He could not expect staff to do grant writing on top of what do daily. They either need to hire a professional or see what Grant Works can do for the City. Grant writers have a success rate in what they do. He took a grant writer course and would not want to be a grant writer. It is too much involved and time-consuming. There are tons of grants out there for cities. Someone must take the time to go after what they know is out there. If part of the compensation covers the actual grant writer, it is a bonus.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini said grant writing is a unique skill set, and some people have had great success. They could hire a successful company or share it with other municipalities through an interlocal agreement for shared cost. They might want some of the same things.

Commissioner Ghovae asked if the City participated in the "Penny for Pinellas" grant program. The City Manager said they receive a distribution and get projects for it. Commissioner Ghovae said the goal is to pump some funds into the City's budget for various reasons. He wants to ensure they can tap into Penny for Pinellas for improvement funding for things like roadways and infrastructure.

Commissioner McGeehen said it would be a great investment for the community. If they had a professional to help get grant money for the community. It would be a win-win situation.

Mayor Brooks reminded everyone that the Florida Leagues of Cities has a grant program they offer. They do grant writing. Anyone can go in and search for available grants. Linda Chaney's Office has offered help with searching for grant opportunities. She does not want to pay someone if some resources and professionals can do it. She spoke to some of the surrounding cities and was told that each department head looks for grant opportunities for what they need. The person finding them does not necessarily need to be the person who writes grants. They already have professionals who work for the City who can write grants and are professionals. She would support if it works out with Grant Works, and they get paid through the grant for their services and the funds they get. She would not support hiring someone to do it. There are too many resources available to them.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini asked if the Florida League of Cities wrote the grants or let you know about the grant opportunities. Mayor Brooks said they provide a portal to search for grant opportunities and will write the grant for them if a grant is found. The City Manager said Euna Solutions is the Florida League of Cities grant writer. The staff looks through the portal and will be more active about doing it. They will begin the budget planning in March and look at what grants are available to help fund things they need over the next couple years.

Commissioner Kerr said he is concerned that they do not have a procedure set. When they know they have a capital outlay, part of the process would be to look for grants. Mayor Brooks said staff look for grants, and if a list is compiled of what grants they have done over the last eight to 10 years, there would be quite a few of them. They might not have all been accepted by the Commission in place at the time, but they do actively search. There might be a system in place. Commissioner Kerr said he hoped there was. It is often mentioned at workshops about needing equipment, and grants are not mentioned. When it was discussed about the electronic Board put up at the Marina, there was no mention of a grant until it was brought up. After the meeting, they

applied for funding through Penny for Pinellas. So, he is not sure it is part of the operational procedure to do that.

Mayor Brooks said a grant writer would only look for grants they are told to seek. Commissioner Kerr said that is why he likes the idea of the consulting service. If they do not need the service and they have other avenues, then before they go out and buy things they need to talk about grants early on before they need it and secure a grant before purchase. Mayor Brooks said it was an administrative conversation Robin would need to have with his staff. The conversation should happen before it comes to the Board.

The City Manager agreed with Commissioner Kerr and said it is a budget issue. They will stress that going forward when putting what they need in the capital budget. They look for grants at that time. The fire chief actively looks for grants for fire equipment. Public Works and Recreation do the same. They will make it an active part of the departments. Grants are available for equipment and capital projects. They have been actively working with the FEMA public assistance grant to get reimbursed for about 10 to 15 million dollars worth of expenditures related to the storm. That is an incredible amount of work, but they must do it. It is incumbent on the administrative side to work with each department head as they look at their budgets for the next several years.

#### **H. Shumaker Advisors – Jim Taylor**

Jim Taylor, Vice President of Shumaker Advisors, introduced himself and provided an overview of the firm's services. He reviewed the appropriations his firm obtained for the City over the years and explained how they plan to help the City in the 2025 legislative session.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Kerr asked if Shumaker Advisors were working on getting federal disaster money for the City's utility undergrounding. Mr. Taylor said they would work with the City to get through the grant process.

Commissioner Kerr asked if they were familiar with the rating structure of property insurance for elevated homes so it remains fair and reasonable. Mr. Taylor said it had been a priority for the State to alleviate increasing premiums, and they will continue to have consistent dialogue with the state lawmakers.

Commissioner Ghovae suggested the Board consider going to Tallahassee once a year during session. He asked how the firm would accommodate them while they were there. Mr. Taylor suggested they come during the Florida League of Cities day because many of the points would be the same. The firm would help set up meetings, and they would offer their office space.

Commissioner Ghovae asked Mr. Taylor to describe what they do. Mr. Taylor said they lobby and advocate for the needs of the City of Madeira Beach.

#### **I. John's Pass Dredging Update – Aptim Presentation**



Nicole Sharp, representative of Aptim, gave an update on the John's Pass dredging project. They have been providing the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with information and reassurances that the project benefits the community and the functioning of the inlet system. They are in the final stages of trying to get state and federal permits.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Kerr asked about the timeline. Ms. Sharp said the DEP has a 45-day timeline from when the information was provided. The State did not want requests for additional information until they visited the project site on January 14. They should hear back from the DEP in about 30 days. The Army Corp of Engineers' timeline for consulting with the agencies is usually 30 days from receiving all complete information.

Commissioner Kerr asked if the dredging would impede boat traffic. Ms. Sharp said it would not be because the project is off to the side of the main channel, and the boaters would have access to go under the bridge.

Commissioner Kerr asked if the sand would be used to renourish the beaches. Ms. Sharp said the sand needs to be disposed of. It is not compatible with the beach. They have some upland park facilities that could benefit from the sand.

Commissioner Ghovae asked if there were any other permitting agencies they needed to go through. Ms. Sharp said there are a lot of agencies, but the most important one is the Department of Transportation. Once they have all the permits, they can begin the work. Commissioner Ghovae asked how long it would take to dredge. Ms. Sharp said they anticipated it would take about 30-45 days. They hope to be out there by June and would request an extension if needed.

Mayor Brooks asked if there would be any issues in receiving the permits. Ms. Sharp did not think there would be any issues. They are in a good position with the Corps. The Mayor said they were told they would have a permit by May of 2024, but they still do not have one. Ms. Sharp said permitting is one of the most complex issues of any project. Emergency projects are prioritized over maintenance projects.

## **J. Q1 FY 2025 Financial Presentation, Including Post-Hurricane Update**

Financial Consultant Andrew Laflin presented the item as follows:

- He prepared a financial overview of the first three months of FY 2025 and compared it to the same three months in FY 2024 and FY 2023 to see if the hurricane had significant impact on certain financial areas.
  - There has been a steady increase from 2023 to 2024 to 2025 in ad valorem taxes. However, they may feel an impact later in FY 2025.
  - There were no significant declines in the non-exchange revenues (other taxes, franchise fees, State shared revenues).

There was a decline in building and planning revenues due to the waiving of hurricane-related permit fees.

- There was a slight decline in the Recreation and Marina fees.
- Parking-related revenues have taken the biggest hit.
  
- He explained the year-to-date hurricane expenses.
  - The Non-Departmental Department had the biggest unanticipated expenditure. He intended to bring a budget amendment to the Board mid-year.
  - Hurricane Helene incurred expenses of \$3,297,537.38.
  - Hurricane Milton incurred expenses of \$76,660.18.
  
- He reviewed the status of the damage assessment.
  - The damage was mainly to the facilities, vehicles, and equipment, which are subject to insurance reimbursements.
  - The damage inventory will be submitted to FEMA for the reimbursement request process.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini asked why there is a discrepancy with the Compensation and Classification Study from the Gehring Group. Mr. Laflin said it was budgeted for in FY 2024 but they did not spend it, so they need to increase the FY 2025 budget with the unspent funds.

Commissioner Kerr asked if they could get retroactive grants for what FEMA does not cover. Mr. Laflin said they would evaluate it and submit everything eligible.

Commissioner Ghovae asked how they project the ad valorem taxes for FY 2025 to be greater than last year. Mr. Laflin said it is the assessed taxable value multiplied by the millage rate. They receive the final information by May or June and budget it at 95%. Commissioner Ghovae asked if the hurricane would affect it. The City Manager said it will. Displaced property owners can apply for a refund. It will impact the City later this fiscal year. Also, if a structure has been demolished, the property value will be lower.

Commissioner Ghovae asked about the stormwater and sanitation charges. The City Manager said they have not been impacted because they are still being billed. An item is on the agenda to address the sanitation fee, but the stormwater fee will continue to be billed.

Mayor Brooks asked what insurance would pay for the repairs to the first floor of City Hall and what repairs are in process. She did not see the Recreation Center on the damage assessment sheet. The City Manager said the \$250,000 is an estimate for City Hall. It and the Recreation Center need to go out to bid. They will add the Recreation Center to the damage assessment sheet. Mr. Laflin said the schedule shows they received an insurance payment for City Hall for \$116,526 and a second proposed payment of \$19,681.

Recreation Director Jay Hatch said the rebuild bid for the Recreation Center is out. A walk-through is scheduled for next week, and the bid opening is in three weeks.

### **K. Emergency Bridge Loan Program**

Financial Consultant Andrew Laflin presented the item. The Florida Commerce Municipal Emergency Bridge Loan program provides interest-free, short-term loans to municipalities impacted by federally declared disasters. The program is designed to help local governments maintain essential operations while awaiting additional funding or revenue recovery. The program is meant to supplement the operational shortfalls due to revenue loss. He will ask for the Board's approval to proceed with the application process at the next regular meeting, finalize the loan details, and bring the specifics back to the Board for final approval.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Mr. Laflin responded to questions and comments from the Board.

Commissioner Kerr asked if it was only for a revenue loss. Mr. Laflin said it is to fund operations and cannot be used for capital improvement. They could use the money to keep operations where they are and maintain the capital program as is.

Commissioner Ghovae asked if they could return the money after 10 years if they did not use it. Mr. Laflin said there could be repayment terms, but it will not include interest. The City Manager said they must apply it to the budget and use the money.

The consensus was to bring the request to the next regular meeting for approval.

## **7. PUBLIC WORKS**

### **A. John's Pass North Jetty Update**

Public Works Director Megan Wepfer explained the item. Staff met with U.S. Army Corps. staff on December 12, 2024, to discuss permitting needs to replace the John's Pass North Jetty sidewalk. During the meeting, Army Corps. staff verbally deemed the replacement exempt as the project is above the mean high tide line and will not change the original state of the jetty (rocks). At the direction of the U.S. Army Corps., staff completed a permit application for exemption on December 16, 2024, and submitted it via email. Confirmation from U.S. Army Corps. stating the project has been assigned to staff on December 31, 2024, and to wait 20 days before reaching out.

A meeting was held on January 9, 2025, with Pinellas County Staff to discuss replacing the sidewalk atop the jetty. County staff asked to see the design plans to determine whether a permit would be required. Pinellas County staff mentioned that if the sidewalk sits in the same footprint, they do not believe that a permit will be needed but will require the City to sign a sidewalk agreement. This sidewalk agreement will determine that the City will be solely responsible for all maintenance and liability of the sidewalk.

As mentioned in the BOC regular meeting on January 8, 2025, staff received a quote for a Mobi Mat of 120 ft X 6.5 ft wide for \$6,205.00. The Mobi mat will function as a temporary mobility area for residents and visitors to walk out to the beach area more easily. This mat will sit just north of the rocks on top of the sand.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. There were no public comments.

Director Wepfer responded to questions and comments from the Board.

### **B. Declared Disaster Sanitation Fee**

The City Manager explained the item. Due to Hurricane Helene, many residents have been displaced and called requesting to stop services. Staff are bringing forth a recommended declared disaster fee to be added to the fees and collection manual. The current monthly charge per dwelling unit is \$38.74, and the recommended disaster fee is \$10.00 per dwelling unit. Staff recommends each single-family or multifamily dwelling unit meet the criteria of an active interior demolition or remodel permit to qualify for the reduced fee. She asked for direction from the Board.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment.

Jim and Jane Shifflett, Madeira Beach residents, said that two of the three properties they own were a complete loss and needed to be torn down. They are looking to save money, and one way is through the sanitation costs they are not using.

Director Wepfer responded to questions and comments from the Board.

The consensus was to bring the proposed ordinance back to the Board.

### **C. Public Works/Satellite Building Department Design**

Public Works Director Megan Wepfer explained the item. The Public Works Department presented a proposal to the Board of Commissioners for the design and construction of a new public works facility that will incorporate a satellite office for the building department and the possibility of adding training facilities for the fire department. Currently, the Public Works Department is working out of a shed that was constructed over 20 years ago and is open to all elements. The mechanic and the sanitation employees are housed off the island. The proposed new building will be 135 ft by 55 ft and have a second-story office, break area, and multiple bays, bringing the mechanic back to the island and allowing them to downsize on rental space.

The proposal for engineering services is broken down into two tasks. Task one covers all geotechnical investigations, which include boring samples to check the soil type and determine which foundation will be needed. Task two covers all construction documents, permitting services, construction administration services, and project certifications. Items that will not be covered by task two are Boundary and topographic survey, traffic studies, design of roadway improvements, lift station design, FDOT permitting, and public hearings.

The fiscal impact of the engineering services is \$62,050. Between the Public Works Department and the Building Department, FY 2025 has a budget of \$1.5 million for the design and construction of the new facility. Staff recommended the approval of the engineering proposal with Pennoni Associates, Inc. for \$62,050.

Mayor Brooks said there was no one present for public comment.

Vice Mayor Tagliarini, Commissioner McGeehen, and Commissioner Ghovae said they support it. Commissioner Kerr said he would not support it.

## **8. RECREATION**

There were no Recreation items on the agenda to discuss.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Ghovae recommended that the Board give Senator Nick DiCeglie and Representative Linda Chaney a key to the City. He suggested putting two mural walls in the City, one near City Hall and the other in John's Pass. He asked for both items to be placed on the workshop agenda.

Mayor Brooks adjourned the meeting at 10:43 p.m.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor

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Clara VanBlargan, MMC, MSM, City Clerk