



# City of North Port

4970 CITY HALL BLVD  
NORTH PORT, FL 34286

## Meeting Minutes - Draft City Commission Special Meeting

### *CITY COMMISSIONERS*

*Christopher B. Hanks, Mayor*  
*Debbie McDowell, Vice-Mayor*  
*Vanessa Carusone, Commissioner*  
*Peter Emrich, Commissioner*  
*Jill Luke, Commissioner*

### *APPOINTED OFFICIALS*

*Peter Lear, City Manager*  
*Amber L. Slayton, City Attorney*  
*Heather Taylor, Acting City Clerk*

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Thursday, September 19, 2019

6:00 PM

CITY COMMISSION CHAMBERS

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### Public Budget Hearing

#### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hanks called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

#### ROLL CALL

**Present:** 5 - Mayor Christopher Hanks, Vice Mayor Debbie McDowell, Commissioner Jill Luke, Commissioner Pete Emrich and Commissioner Vanessa Carusone

#### Also Present:

City Manager Peter Lear, Assistant City Attorney Michael Golen, Deputy City Clerk Heather Taylor, Fire Chief Scott Titus, Police Chief Todd Garrison and Recording Secretary Ida Goodman

#### The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Luke.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Golen.

#### 1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

*A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Vice-Mayor McDowell, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:*

**Yes:** 5 - Mayor Hanks, Vice Mayor McDowell, Commissioner Luke, Commissioner Emrich and Commissioner Carusone

#### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Subsequent to Mayor Hanks clarifying the procedure to which public comment would be heard, public comment was held.

Victor Dobrin: expressed concern with tax increases and recommended possible budget cuts.

Kevin Shaughnessy: expressed concern with tax increases and the need to communicate with and educate the public

Donald Richardson: expressed concern with the process moving forward and spoke to aggressive annexation to bring in diversified industry

MaryAnn Novak: expressed concern with tax increases

Vincent Mejias: expressed concern with tax increases

Joan Kassay: expressed concern with tax increases and suggested budget cuts

Joe Caetto: expressed concern with tax increases and suggested budget cuts

Tim Ritchie: spoke to Mosaic Bartow Chemical Plant and stack system discharge into waterways

Carolyn Price: expressed concern with tax increases and the need to be fiscally responsible

Cory Chadwick: expressed concern with tax increases and asked if Law Enforcement Officers have the choice to use take home vehicles

John Meisel: expressed concern with tax increases, wasteful spending, and impact fees

Paul Kahle: expressed concern with tax increases, impact future projects will have on future tax increases and recommended budget cuts

Joe Wactowski: expressed concern with tax increases and lack of due diligence

Conni Brunni: expressed concern with tax increases and spoke to Consumer Price Index and to addressing needs versus wants

Phil Stokes: expressed concern with tax increases and the need to be fiscally responsible and suggested a budget advisory board be created

David Samuel: expressed support of upcoming West Villages Town Hall and spoke to the City's form of government, article in West Villages Sun, line item review of budget items, and suggested budget cuts

Ruth Thurber: spoke to history of aquatic center and capital expenditures

Ivie Pierfelice: expressed concern with tax increases with emphasis on seniors on fixed incomes

### **3. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

#### **ORDINANCES - Second Reading**

- A. [ORD. NO. 2019-40](#) An Ordinance of the City of North Port, Florida, Providing for Certification and Adoption of an Ad Valorem Millage Rate for the 2019-20 Fiscal Year; Providing for Levying and Assessment; Providing for Severability;

### Providing for Conflicts; and Providing an Effective Date

Ms. Taylor read the Ordinance title and Section 2.01 into the record.

Mr. Lear introduced the item.

Discussion took place regarding staffing after the recession and lack of action by prior Commission, adjustments made based on wage study results, changes not being reflected in budget, level of service needed for West Villages, service level coming from policy set in place by Commission, increases in inflation, benefits and salary, tax rate comparisons in the area, increase in revenue, impact on reserves, compromising at 3.8735, and the projected deficit from the aquatic center.

Mr. Lear replied to Commission questions regarding fund balance, prior discussion on use of reserves, funds for use at a 5% minimum, fund balance needed for bonds, disaster relief at 15-20% with 5%, concern with changing policy, fund balance with 3.8735 millage, amount of millage rate increase associated with aquatic center, accounting for increase in value of homes, and use of School Resource Officers.

Discussion continued regarding difference in two reserve accounts and violating the policy to account for increases.

Mr. Lear clarified public comment statement regarding funds paid from the West Villages.

Discussion ensued regarding Federal, State and County mandates and possible budget cuts.

At the request of Commission, Vice-Mayor McDowell provided possible budget cuts to include one-time expenditures, code enforcement administrative specialist, IT telecommunications manager, Comcast and dark fiber installation, four police officers, fitness equipment, grounds manager, business manager for EMS, medical insurance for self insurance fund, Sarasota County Economic Development Council contract, travel and per diem, and extending start date of new hires.

Discussion followed regarding amount budgeted for Commission travel, removing the Code Enforcement Specialist at \$43,000, and \$870,000 in one-time expenditures.

Mr. Lear spoke to operational equipment in the one-time expenditures.

Discussion continued regarding equipment replacement plan, 2.5% of available fund balance, and implementation of new hires.

Mr. Lear responded to questions regarding bond rating evaluations, impact of continuing to violate bond policy, and stated the fund balance policy states you have to replace the fund balance if it goes below 5%, and provided an example of stabilization funds usage.

Discussion followed regarding lowering the millage to 3.8735 utilizing the stabilization reserve fund for one-time expenditures, ability to change policy in the future, prior Commission discussion to use stabilization fees, the need to get to a consistent basis, and additional policies to make sure there are funds for one-time expenses.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Commissioner Emrich, to approve Ordinance No. 2019-40 as amended to lower the millage to 3.8735, utilizing the stabilization reserve fund for one-time expenditures. The motion carried by the following vote:***

**Yes:** 3 - Commissioner Luke, Commissioner Emrich and Commissioner Carusone

**No:** 2 - Mayor Hanks and Vice Mayor McDowell

Vice-Mayor McDowell dissented due to jeopardizing the emergency fund and needed spending cuts.

**B. [ORD. NO. 2019-41](#)** An Ordinance of the City of North Port, Florida, Adopting a Non-District Budget for the Fiscal Year Beginning October 1, 2019 and Ending on September 30, 2020; Adopting the Capital Improvement Budget and Program; Prescribing the Terms, Conditions and Provisions with Respect to the Items of Appropriation and their Payment; Providing for Supplemental Appropriations and Re-appropriations; Providing for Conflicts; Providing for Severability; and Providing an Effective Date.

Ms. Taylor read the Ordinance by title only.

Mr. Lear introduced the item and noted the motion must address the amendment to the millage rate.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Commissioner Emrich, to approve Ordinance No. 2019-41, with the amendment to Exhibit A to reflect the millage rate of 3.8735. The motion carried by the following vote:***

**Yes:** 4 - Mayor Hanks, Commissioner Luke, Commissioner Emrich and Commissioner Carusone

**No:** 1 - Vice Mayor McDowell

Vice-Mayor McDowell dissented due to not approving the millage rate.

Mayor Hanks stated he approved due to ensuring everyone is taken care of with the millage rate that the Board approved.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Victor Dobrin: accountability for impact fees and expressed concern with lack of a plan

**5. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS:**

Commission Communications were not discussed.

**6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL REPORTS:**

Administrative and Legal Reports were not discussed.

**7. ADJOURNMENT:**

Mayor Hanks adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

City of North Port, Florida

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher B. Hanks, Mayor

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Heather Taylor, Interim City Clerk

Minutes approved at the Commission Meeting this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.