



City of North Port

4970 CITY HALL BLVD
NORTH PORT, FL 34286

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Commission Workshop

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
Kathryn Peto, City Clerk
Heather Taylor, Deputy City Clerk

Monday, May 6, 2019

9:00 AM

CITY COMMISSION CHAMBERS

CALL TO ORDER

The North Port City Commission Workshop was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in City Commission Chambers by Mayor Hanks.

ROLL CALL

Present: 3 - Mayor Christopher Hanks, Vice-Mayor Debbie McDowell and Commissioner Jill Luke
Absent: 2 - Commissioner Pete Emrich and Commissioner Vanessa Carusone

Also Present:

City Manager Peter Lear, City Attorney Amber Slayton, Deputy City Clerk Heather Taylor, Public Utilities Director Rick Newkirk, Public Utilities Assistant Director Jennifer Desrosiers, Engineering Manager Michael Acosta, Engineer Jennifer Fehrs, and Field Operations Manager Michael Vuolo

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Newkirk.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

2. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Present: 4 - Mayor Christopher Hanks, Vice-Mayor Debbie McDowell, Commissioner Jill Luke and Commissioner Pete Emrich

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Vanessa Carusone

A. [19-0393](#) Discussion on Utilities Neighborhood Expansion Project

Mr. Lear introduced the item.

Mr. Newkirk read a quote regarding doing what is hard to accomplish what is right, spoke to prior Commission direction, reviewed the item including plan to mitigate unsewered parcels, and displayed locations of sewer parcels, septic parcels, and currently occupied septic parcels.

Commissioner Emrich joined the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Mr. Newkirk continued his review of the item including current septic tanks with emphasis on current regulations and noted the items for discussion.

Ms. Desrosiers responded to Commission questions regarding 1972 regulations and future infrastructure compliance for central water and sewage for parcels needing to be subdivided.

Mr. Acosta spoke to wood chip concept including meeting with Steve Suau from Progressive Water Resources with emphasis on Lakewood Ranch community's success in "polishing" reclaimed water but not a replacement for sanitary sewer systems, and Department of Health's (DOH) consideration of wood chips as advance treatments.

Ms. Fehrs reviewed septic tank inspections emphasizing Charlotte County currently does inspections and Sarasota County and the City of North Port do not.

Ms. Desrosiers reviewed fees and costs for wastewater including plant capacity fees, line extension fees, demo/abandon/disconnect septic tank, connect to central wastewater, permitting and lien recording fee, and fees and costs for water with emphasis on meter connection and rate analysis.

Mr. Newkirk informed the Commission the City was not approved for grant funding for the neighborhood expansion, spoke to discussion with the City's Grant Writer regarding pursuing other avenues, and stated he will continue to apply for every applicable grant available.

Ms. Desrosiers reviewed financing systems including current Surtax III funding and future vote to extend the use of the Surtax, current process for existing property owners to make payments, cost recovery and annual give back to Surtax, options to off-set costs and number of associated homes per off-set amount, comparison of homeowner impact based on possible off-sets, staff's recommendation of \$10,000 off-set per property requiring property owner payment of \$15,000, adding compacity and line extension fee payment plan option to utility bill, assessment districts requirements, and staff's recommendation to add a cap of 20 years to the repayment plan.

Mr. Acosta spoke to the hybrid connection program including prior discussion, state law requirements regarding notification and connection timeframe for wastewater projects, Commission's ability to waive water connection requirements, and connection upon failure of well and/or septic tanks with emphasis on coordination with DOH, hook-up upon sale of property, and hook-up within one year of notification.

Mr. Vuolo spoke to City of North Port Code Section 78-60 requirements regarding utility

connection within 365 days and new construction requirements to connect immediately.

Ms. Desrosiers reviewed map of current commercial areas with emphasis on water and sewer availability per location, City of North Port Code Section 5-09 regarding Bond Covenants that do not allow free services, comprehensive plan regarding water and wastewater stating the developer's responsibilities, Ordinance 2019-087 regarding Surtax, public input, and referendum to continue one-cent sales tax, project slide to extend water and wastewater to platted lots within the City for environmental benefits, the design and permit of the extension of services to interchanges at Sumter Boulevard and Toledo Blade Boulevard with the intent to save one to two years for an incoming developer noting the funds would need to be reimbursed to the City, and displayed a map showing water and wastewater availability for Sumter Boulevard and Toledo Blade Boulevard.

Mr. Acosta reviewed staff's recommendations to include moving forward with Request for Proposal (RFP) process for design of the initial phase of the neighborhood expansion project at full cost for new unimproved properties and partially off-set cost for existing allowing \$10,000 off-set per property for a specific period of time (one year), hybrid connection for existing customers for water, title transfer connections, continue to fund with Surtax, and cap monthly payments at a 20-year payment plan, and spoke to single vacuum stations.

Staff responded to Commission questions regarding \$10,000 versus \$5,000 off-set, fees and costs with emphasis on homeowner responsibility for demo and abandonment of septic tank, ability for the City to finance and enter into agreement with the homeowner, ability for homeowner to do work themselves, review of Charlotte County's program regarding construction cost off-set, cost comparison for vacuum system versus gravity system, clarification of the difference of lift-station and gravity system, advantages/disadvantages of each system, cosmetic features of systems, focusing on laying lines so new construction will need to hook up, City of North Port Code Section 78-60 regarding City Commission's ability to extend 365-day requirements for water, state requirement for hook-up to sewer, establishing a flat rate to monitor sewer if there is no water connection, measuring of wastewater usage, level of service determined in rates through rate analysis, and disadvantages to those who have functioning septic tanks and wells.

Ms. Slayton spoke to state statute requirements and uniqueness with North Port being pre-platted.

Staff continued to reply to Commission questions regarding current discount applied to those who show proof of well installation within the last five years, graduated credit based on years of service of well installation, implementation of discount for sewer, and compensation to homeowners based on age of septic tanks and wells.

Discussion took place regarding the benefit to the community city-wide to hook up to Warm Mineral Springs and then out to the interstate interchanges then focusing on neighborhoods, infrastructure already in place at Madagascar Avenue area, program to purchase lots that will never be developed along Myakkahatchee Creek, priority locations including WMS followed by interchanges, cost to run lines to WMS and impact on existing rate payers, pros and cons with looping down Ortiz Boulevard, commercial properties on Ortiz Boulevard, commercial development regarding quarter-mile requirements for Sumter Boulevard and I-75, oversizing lines to accommodate for eventual connections, connection for residential areas off Sumter Boulevard, and individual homes not connecting to force main for commercial locations on Sumter Boulevard.

Mr. Newkirk reviewed how all of the individual homes would be connected to one central system.

Discussion continued regarding feasibility of running a line west along I-75, from Lamarque Elementary to Sumter Boulevard.

In response to Commission questions, Mr. Newkirk stated he would review why the engineer of record went the other route.

Discussion ensued regarding looping, waterline looping for Lamarque Avenue, possibility to obtain information on the feasibility of Lamarque to the Sumter interchange, and current permitted from City Hall north on Sumter Boulevard.

Mr. Lear spoke to whether the City has the right-of-way to the interchange.

Discussion continued regarding use of rights-of-way in front of residential lots and easements in the back, loss of surrounding neighborhood capacity by adding compacity to the lift station, and current design down Sumter Boulevard.

There was consensus to direct staff to bring back the costs of construction from City Hall north to the four quadrants for city water and city sewer and from Lamarque westward to the four quadrants at Sumter Boulevard.

Discussion took place regarding preparing for possible development on Sumter Boulevard, need for balance of commercial and residential, current commercial designated parcels at interchange of Toledo Blade Boulevard and I-75, infrastructure run by the developers, cost to run lines from what is existing under I-75 to the other side of I-75, obtaining updated cost estimates, anticipation of the city to provide services with the exception of the Estates, residential hook-up including prorated amounts dependent on age of septic and well, and staff bringing back current proration policy for water to determine suggestion for sewer.

Ms. Desrosiers spoke to mandatory connection and incentive programs to hook-up within a certain period of time and responded to questions regarding the pilot program.

Mr. Acosta spoke to the importance of doing both water and sewer at the same time. environmental consequences, septic tank inspections, health concerns with water quality when well and septic are located on the same property, stated the dual approach is more efficient and cost effective and noted issues with septic tanks leaking into waterways.

In response to Commission questions, Mr. Lear noted the City is still looking into North Port being used as a test model along the canals.

Discussion took place regarding wood chips being under all water tanks, and DOH regulations for septic tanks and the City's ability to require wood chips under septic tanks.

Staff reviewed their recommendation to move forward with RFP process for Madagascar area and branching to possible other areas, and responded to Commission questions regarding cost for design and permitting, whether the engineer will follow through the project after the design phase, \$7,000 per year for oversight of assessment district process, current process for payment plan agreement, timeframe for completion of assessment plan, monthly administration fee and services obtained for that fee, possible discounts for cash up front, engineer fee presented in January for \$750,000 design, permitting and construction, and the RFP including the construction phase services.

Discussion took place regarding \$10 a month administrative fee being excessive, determining a feasible administrative fee amount, obtaining verification that the funds collected are being used towards administrative time, and estimated line extension fee calculation estimates for construction costs.

Upon Commission request, Mr. Lear stated he would provide Commission with the current available funding for expansion needs, what has been put aside for Surtax in the last five to 10 years and what projects have been completed.

Ms. Desrosiers responded to Commission questions regarding goal for utilities to break even, funding plans to be able to continue to expand, and intent of line extension fee.

Discussion followed regarding importance of grant funding.

There was consensus to direct staff to bring back a breakdown of Surtax for the past 10 years, projects the Surtax has funded in the past 10 years, and include a fund balance or contingency balance for the Utilities Department.

Discussion continued regarding the \$10,000 incentive and concern with it not being an equal benefit to all property owners, intent of incentive for those who have already installed a well and septic, mandatory hook-up for water, and obtaining DOH input regarding water hook-up.

There was consensus to go with the proposed hybrid that staff has recommended for water with the other information requested of staff to bring back; striking bullet point 2.

Discussion took place regarding hook-up during sale of property, fees associated during time of sale and impact on property sale, hook-up at well failure and incentive only applicable when hook-up both water and sewer is completed at the same time within a year.

There was failure to achieve consensus to make hook-up part of the sale of the property.

There was consensus for the cost incentive to apply when both water and sewer at the same time within a year.

There was consensus to direct staff to move forward with the RFP process.

There was consensus to continue to allow monthly payments for existing customers similar to existing program and implement a maximum of 30 years.

There was consensus to continue to fund the project with Surtax dollars.

Mr. Newkirk stated he would send Vice-Mayor the quote he read.

Discussion followed regarding money spent out of surtax could be used to run lines to commercial properties, benefits obtained through the RFP process, and further information being provided to Commission through the RFP process.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

4. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS:

Commissioner Luke spoke to Comcast providing service to a customer who moved into a Habitat for Humanity Home off Biscayne Boulevard.

Vice-Mayor McDowell, Mayor Hanks, and Commissioner Emrich did not have any communications.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL REPORTS:

There were no administrative or legal reports.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Hanks adjourned the North Port City Commission Workshop at 11:39 a.m.

City of North Port, Florida

By: _____
Christopher B. Hanks, Mayor

Attest: _____
Kathryn Wong, City Clerk

Minutes approved at the City Commission Regular Meeting this ____ day of _____, 2019.