



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
Kathryn Wong, City Clerk
Heather Taylor, Deputy City Clerk

Thursday, September 5, 2019

6:00 PM

CITY COMMISSION CHAMBERS

Public Budget Hearing

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hanks called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Also Present:

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

Also Present:

City Manager Pete Lear; City Attorney Amber Slayton; Deputy City Clerk Heather Taylor; Recording Secretary Susan Hale; Police Chief Todd Garrison; Fire Chief Scott Titus; Utilities Assistant Director Jennifer Desrosiers.

A moment of silence was observed for those affected by Hurricane Dorian, after which the Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Commission.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Luke 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:

Brenda Farley: millage rate, City deficits, aquatic center, and Police Department and Fire Department services.

Paul Kahle: tax increases, community programs that run in deficit, and police vehicles taken home.

Ward Kreidler: tax increases, Sumter Boulevard improvement, aquatic center revenue concerns, Warm Mineral Springs expenditures, and City growth.

Victor Dobrin: fiscal discipline, financial soundness of Warm Mineral Springs, sell aquatic center, and flexibility of spending.

Kevin Shaughnessy: rate increases, aquatic center projected deficit, educating public regarding revenues and expenditures, and return on investment analysis of everything.

Ray Jeries: home valuation and increased taxes, and impact fees.

Jennifer Zambrano: sinking funds, privatization of aquatic center, contractual increases, and environmental grants for Warm Mineral Springs.

David Samuel: millage rate, citizens suggestions, public education regarding government, fixed income retirees, and tax increases.

Nick Trolli: Sarasota County funding for YMCA not moved to aquatic center.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

ORDINANCES - First 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

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Luke, to read the Ordinance by title and Section 2 regarding the levying and assessment. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Ms. Taylor read the Ordinance by title only and Section 2.

Mr. Lear provided an overview of the item including reasons for the rate increases.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Victor Dobrin: increase in taxes, salary increases for department heads, overspending, sell aquatic center, and use reserves.

Greg Culy: tax increases, fiscal irresponsibility, reduce spending and reduce tax.

Mr. Lear spoke to the reserve policy and amount scheduled to be added to the reserves this year, using reserve funds to reduce the millage rate by .11, Warm Mineral Springs funding, roll-back rate, inflationary cost estimates vs. the millage increase, aquatic center share of millage assessments, police vehicles being driven home being a union bargaining issue, Sumter Boulevard improvements, ways to reduce the millage rate, the millage rate increase from last year, the proposed budget decreased by \$5.5 million, required replenishment of the 20% reserves, police vehicle replacements from surtax, and the negative effect of using part of the 20% reserves has on the City's bonding rate.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor McDowell, to set the millage rate for 3.600. The

motion died for lack of a second.

A motion was made by Commissioner Carusone, to continue Ordinance No. 2019-40 for second reading, changing the millage rate to 4.0113 and using the Fund Balance for the \$870,000 one-time expenditures. The motion died for lack of a second.

A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Commissioner Emrich, to continue Ordinance No. 2019-40 for second reading on September 19, 2019 using the millage rate of 3.944, to be used as City Manager stated, keeping the 20% and taking the emergency down to 2.5%. The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Commissioner Luke and Commissioner Emrich

No: 3 - Mayor Hanks, Vice-Mayor McDowell and Commissioner Carusone

Vice-Mayor McDowell opposed the motion due to upcoming projects that are not funded, excessive spending in Service Level Adjustments, and the need to keep taxes in line with growth.

Commissioner Carusone opposed the motion because it puts the City in violation of its own policy, and repercussions of replenishing the policy next year, incremental increases over the last few years would have been better, and it is imperative that the Level of Service remains the same.

Mayor Hanks opined that budget cuts were made that could be made.

Discussion ensued regarding ways to compromise.

Mr. Lear spoke to the budget process as it applies to recurring and one-time expenditures, no one-time expenditures being expected next year, and using \$870,000 will reduce the Fund Balance to just under the 25%.

Vice-Mayor McDowell favored cutting all one-time expenditures and to rein in wants and needs and focus on infrastructure.

Commissioner Emrich favored a millage rate of 3.944.

Commissioner Luke agreed with Commissioner Emrich to lower the millage to 3.944.

Mr. Lear spoke to the negative impacts of decreasing the Fund Balance below 25%, and plans to secure the City Hall building.

Mayor Hanks voiced concern regarding decreasing the Fund Balance below 25% and having to replenish it next year, and other substantial projects looming next year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Carusone, seconded by Commissioner Luke, to continue Ordinance No. 2019-40 to second reading with a millage rate of 4.0113, using the \$870,000 for the one-time expenditures out of the Fund Balance. The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 1 - Commissioner Carusone

No: 4 - Mayor Hanks, Vice-Mayor McDowell, Commissioner Luke and Commissioner Emrich

A motion was made by Mayor Hanks, seconded by Commissioner Luke, to

continue Ordinance No. 2019-40 for second reading on September 19, 2019 as presented. The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Mayor Hanks and Commissioner Carusone

No: 3 - Vice-Mayor McDowell, Commissioner Luke and Commissioner Emrich

Discussion ensued regarding additional compromises, and cutting additional expenses such as staff.

Mayor Hanks and Vice-Mayor McDowell articulated the illogic reducing the Economic Uncertainty Fund to keep additional staff, and Mayor Hanks commented on unwise past choices not to make incremental increases.

Mr. Lear spoke to eliminating nine police officers not reducing the millage rate, remaining vacancies for police officers, and all surtax funding that can be appropriated has been.

Mayor Hanks voiced concern that nothing else is working except with what is being proposed.

Mr. Lear confirmed that replacing \$530,000 reduces the millage rate to 4.0872, and the City Manager proposed rate is 4.2056.

A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Vice-Mayor McDowell, to continue Ordinance No. 2019-40 to second reading on September 19, 2019, using the millage rate of 3.8063. The motion and second were withdrawn.

A motion was made by Commissioner Carusone, seconded by Commissioner Luke, to approve continue Ordinance No. 2019-40 to include the new proposed millage rate at 4.0872, by not refunding the \$530,000. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Mayor Hanks and Vice-Mayor McDowell

Recess was taken from 7:58 p.m. -- 8:17 p.m.

Mayor Hanks suggested moving the remainder of the meeting agenda until the September 10th meeting.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Luke, to continue the City Commission Special Meeting regarding the Public Hearing for the Budget until time certain of 8:30 p.m. tonight. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Recess was taken from 8:21 p.m. -- 8:30 p.m.

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.

A motion was made by Commissioner Carusone, seconded by Commissioner Luke, to read Ordinance No. 2019-41 by title only. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Ms. Taylor read the Ordinance by title only.

Mr. Lear introduced the item.

Discussion ensued regarding an error on page 75 of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) book pertaining to the acoustic improvements for the George Mullen Center and Morgan Center.

There was a consensus to direct staff to correct the description in CIP book page 75 to state that acoustic improvements for the Mullen Center will be in fiscal year 2019-2020 and the Morgan will be in year 2020-2021, and to ensure the amounts are correct for each location.

Discussion continued regarding clarification of the Deer Prairie Creek Bridge donations on page 81 and a consensus was requested.

There was a consensus to direct staff to update the numbers on page 81 for the Deer Prairie Creek Bridge donations.

Mr. Lear spoke to Warm Springs revised surtax funds of \$1 million for rehabilitation tasks for construction and oversight.

It was noted that the Tropicair Boulevard road rehabilitation funds must remain and clarification is needed in the description.

There was a consensus to ensure that the Tropicair Boulevard road rehabilitation project includes in the description for \$600,000: "including dark fiber."

Mr. Lear clarified that the intersection project at Hillsborough and Cranberry Boulevards was discussed during budget workshops, Madagascar Avenue project funding to be corrected between first and second reading from the current year and move it to the Job Growth CIP page.

A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Commissioner Carusone, to continue Ordinance No. 2019-41 for second reading on September 19, 2019.

Mr. Lear clarified that the motion must be based on the new millage rate adopted.

The motion and second were withdrawn.

A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Commissioner Carusone, to continue Ordinance No. 2019-41 with millage rate of 4.0872 to second reading on September 19, 2019. 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 opposed the millage rate and cannot approve the budget.

RESOLUTIONS:

C. [RES. NO.](#)
[2019-R-24](#)

Resolution No. 2019-R-24, A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of North Port, Florida, Approving Assessment Rolls for Fiscal Year 2019-20 for Various Assessment Areas Established Pursuant to Ordinance No. 2000-25; Establishing the Lien Associated Therewith; Directing that the Assessment Rolls be Certified to the Sarasota County Tax Collector; Providing for Conflicts and Severability, and Providing an Effective Date.

Ms. Taylor read the Resolution by title only.

Mr. Lear introduced the item, and spoke to reasoning of why this legislation is renewed annually.

Ms. Desrosiers spoke to next year being the last year for assessments for the two districts and was originally done to extend sewer and water to the area, rates and financing as applied to water line extensions, and the wastewater side Phase 2 is schedule to come to Commission on October 8, 2019 with a consultant contract.

Mr. Lear clarified pro-rating incentives will also be included in the discussion.

A motion was made by Commissioner Luke, seconded by Commissioner Carusone, to approve Resolution No. 2019-R-24 as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

4. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Victor Dobrin: prioritizing needs and delaying wants.

It was requested that the Finance staff contact Mr. Dobrin regarding his concerns.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Hanks adjourned the Commission Budget Hearing Meeting at 8:57 p.m.

City of North Port, Florida

By: _____
Christopher B. Hanks, Mayor

Attest: _____
Heather Taylor, Deputy City Clerk

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