



# City of North Port

4970 CITY HALL BLVD  
NORTH PORT, FL 34286

## Meeting Minutes - Final City Commission Special Meeting

### *CITY COMMISSIONERS*

*Debbie McDowell, Mayor*

*Jill Luke, Vice Mayor*

*Christopher Hanks, Commissioner*

*Pete Emrich, Commissioner*

*Vanessa Carusone, Commissioner*

### *APPOINTED OFFICIALS*

*Peter Lear, City Manager*

*Amber L. Slayton, City Attorney*

*Heather Taylor, Interim City Clerk*

---

Thursday, February 6, 2020

1:00 PM

City Commission Chambers

---

### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor McDowell called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

### ROLL CALL

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

### Also Present

Assistant City Manager Cari Branco, City Attorney Amber Slayton, Human Resources Director Christine McDade, Neighborhood Development Services Director Frank Miles, North Port Police Officer Finnegan, Fire Chief Titus, Economic Development Manager Mel Thomas, Social Services Manager Janet Carrillo, Interim City Clerk Heather Taylor, Police Chief Todd Garrison and Recording Secretary Ida Goodman.

**The Pledge of Allegiance was led by David Duval.**

### 1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

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

**Absent:** 1 - Commissioner Carusone

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

David Duvall - Andrew Sias application for membership on the Charter Review Advisory Board.

**3. CONSENT AGENDA:**

Mayor McDowell recognized former Sarasota County Commissioner John Thaxton.

*A motion was made by Vice Mayor Luke, seconded by Commissioner Hanks, to approved the consent agenda as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:*

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

**Absent:** 1 - Commissioner Carusone

- A. [20-1830](#) Proposed Budget Calendar for FY 2020-2021

*This item was approved on consent.*

- B. [20-1843](#) Appoint Andrew Sias to the Charter Review Advisory Board to serve from February 6, 2020 to February 6, 2022.

*This item was approved on consent.*

**4. WELCOME OF NEW EMPLOYEES:**

- A. [20-1773](#) Welcome New Employees

Ms. McDade introduced the new employees.

**5. PRESENTATIONS: TIME LIMIT OF 15 MINUTES**

- A. [20-1758](#) Chris Johnson, Suncoast Partnership: Homeless Community Outreach

Vice Mayor Luke introduced Chris Johnson, CEO Suncoast Partnership and provided background information and an overview.

Officer Finnagin provided an overview of the investigation regarding the death of a homeless individual, the homeless efforts of the North Port Police Department, the work of the homeless initiative, the increased number of homeless individuals documented in North Port, and an overview of the social services needed.

Commissioner Carusone arrived at 1:17 p.m.

Mr. Johnson provided a presentation on homelessness including the intent of the initiative, homeless statistics in Sarasota County, clients lost in the Suncoast continuum of care, current data from North Port homeless outreach team, and outreach case manager funding.

Discussion ensued regarding North Port Police efforts and standards, social services needed for outreach to connect individuals to the expert services needed, and funding education to ensure those working with the homeless are licensed experts.

Chief Garrison clarified that police officers could not be licensed mental health care providers but do work toward providing guidance to the homeless to connect with services they require.

Discussion continued regarding a case manager as a contact point for homeless services, rental properties and affordable housing, planning for the future homeless statistics, pilot program for case managers and the North Port "Hot Team", possible office space and funding to facilitate a case manager, definition of "exit counts" and "client counts", components of homeless outreach teams in Sarasota City and County including outreach workers and available beds at the shelter, the methodology for the outreach case worker to interact and provide services and guidance to the homeless, the outreach in South County providing beds until individuals can be provided the services they require and identifying the necessary available services for the outreach case manager to utilize, negotiating with the Sarasota County Sheriffs Department for the use of the "hot beds" for North Port homeless, and current available beds/housing.

John Thaxton, Sr. Vice President Gulfcoast Community Foundation, noted per the Sarasota County Sheriff, North Port residents are eligible to be provided with beds in Sarasota County and the available housing in Sarasota has been largely funded by the Gulfcoast Community Foundation and is available for North Port residents as well.

Ms. Carrillo provided clarification on the office space available at the Family Service Center.

Discussion continued regarding the suggestion of a case manager be under the employment of the Suncoast Partnership to enable a direct access to data bases for services and funding resource for the hiring of a case manager.

***There was a consensus to request staff work with Suncoast Partnership, funding agencies and the North Port Police Department to initiate the presented pilot program to begin on June 1, 2020, utilizing one of the offices at Social Services to house the case manager and staff for the pilot program.***

***There was a consensus to bring back the item by April 1, 2020 including the funding sources and the \$20,000.00 financial support of a case manager for Commission approval.***

**B. [20-1775](#)**

**Neighborhood Development Services, Planning Division Presentation**

Ms. Galhouse and Mr. Miles provided a presentation including update of activities, staffing, new development petitions, special event and temporary use permits, special assistance program applications, projects including "Experience Living in North Port" assisted living project, Activity Center 9 Central Park, the development of 126 units in Palm Port development, Woodlands Phase I West Villages, Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) update, impact fee and mobility study, the Shire Master Plan, goals for 2020 including the adoption of the revised ULDC, streamlining processes, innovative development of Activity Centers, and increase outreach and education.

Discussion ensued regarding the timeline for the next update on the Comprehensive Plan, extension of Toledo Blade Boulevard to SR 72, and receiving further information regarding an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to include the extension.

Ms. Bellia provided a history of the extension, the need for a better transportation route to I-75, the urgent need for a traffic signal at Toledo Blade Boulevard and I-75 and noted Florida Department of Transportation's request for alternate route when I-75 has to be closed due to an emergency which could be met with the extension.

Chief Titus provided an overview and information on the history of the discussion regarding

this connection between Toledo Blade Boulevard and SR 72.

Discussion continued regarding Representative Buchanan's support for a traffic light at I-75 and Toledo Blade Boulevard, Florida Department of Transportation timeline for improvements to the I-75 and Toledo Blade Boulevard improvements, warranted analysis for a traffic light at I-75/Toledo Blade Boulevard and I-75/Sumter Boulevard, utilizing the Toledo Blade Boulevard and SR 72 as an additional evacuation route and the possibility of funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation and other agencies, the extension as an enhancement to Orange Hammock Ranch, Metropolitan Planning Organization reviewing a long range transportation plan including the I-75 corridor and alternate routes, and new extension in the Venice area from Knights Trail to SR 681.

***There was a consensus for the City Manager and staff to prepare an agenda item looking at the historic data information, evacuation route, overlays of property, County and City lines, environmental impacts, wetlands information and other information the staff deems appropriate to be provided as soon as possible for the extension of Toledo Blade Boulevard to SR 72.***

Discussion continued regarding the timeline of the last Comprehensive Plan update, Florida Department of Transportation delaying I-75 improvement until 2040 for the completed BDE (Building Development & Environmental) Study, funding for the requested traffic signals, sending the traffic signal request to the City lobbyist, and informing developers on the City rules and regulations regarding developments.

***There was a consensus for staff to have a plan of action regarding a traffic light at I-75 and Toledo Blade and Sumter Boulevards.***

#### [20-1758](#)

Chris Johnson, Suncoast Partnership: Homeless Community Outreach

Recess was taken from 2:33 p.m. to 2:42 p.m.

Mayor McDowell requested the previous motion regarding the "hot team" and case manager with Social Services be reconsidered.

***A motion was made by Vice Mayor Luke, seconded Mayor McDowell to reconsider item 20-1758. The motion carried on the following vote:***

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

**Absent:** 1 - Commissioner Carusone

Ms. Branco noted that when the Commission moved to have a timeline for the creation of a case manager position, the funding was not considered and more time will be needed.

***There was a consensus for staff to bring back to the Commission the plan to establish a case manager position and pilot program including the required funding source by June 1, 2020.***

## **6. GENERAL BUSINESS:**

### **A. [20-1707](#)**

Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Commissioners Sitting on Advisory Boards

Ms. Branco introduced the item.

Discussion ensued regarding current Commission membership on advisory boards and benefits, duties of a staff liaison, temporarily appointing a Commissioner for one quarter,

a Commissioner on a board as a hindrance and undue influence, how to determine what boards would be appropriate for a Commissioner as a non-voting member, the board making recommendations and suggestions to the entire Commission, benefits of a Commissioner on a board, and interaction of Mayor McDowell on the Community Economic Development Advisory Board and board suggestions.

Ms. Slayton clarified the issues and legal points of appointing a Commissioner on an advisory board including quasi-judicial boards which could be considered a Commissioner holding dual office, and Florida Sunshine Law pertaining to a Commissioner serving on a Board with another Commissioner providing public comment.

Discussion continued regarding the intent of an advisory board to advise and make recommendations to the Commission, past history of a Commissioner sitting on advisory boards, purpose of a joint meeting, staff liaisons duties, appointing a Commissioner on the Community Economic Development Advisory Board, and process for advisory boards making recommendations to the Commission.

Ms. Slayton noted that the Code allows for a City Commissioner and County Commissioner to sit on an advisory board as an ex officio member with no voting rights.

Discussion continued regarding a County Commissioner on an advisory board and having County staff to act as a County liaison on an advisory board, previous direction to staff to review and reconsider the composition of the membership of the Community Economic Development Advisory Board and having this as an agenda item.

Ms. Thomas clarified that the Board has been working on recruitment efforts and recommended reviewing the criteria of membership including researching information of other Community Economic Development Advisory Boards, increasing the number of meetings per year to monthly meetings, and the process of providing recommendations and ideas.

Discussion continued on the Community Economic Development Advisory Board recommendations regarding the membership criteria and establishing specific membership requirements.

Public comment:

David Duvall - Role of a staff liaisons and communication with board members.

Discussion continued regarding process for Commission receiving recommendations, options for an advisory board as a whole providing Commission information and recommendations, and requirement of boards annual report to the Commission.

***There was a consensus for Mayor McDowell to be relieved of her role on the Community Economic Development Advisory Board during such time as the representatives on the board are being redefined.***

**B. [20-1844](#)**

Discussion and Possible Action Regarding North Port's Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption

Ms. Branco introduced the item.

Ms. Thomas clarified State Statutes requirement of voting on the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax, history of economic development using the tax, and using the tax for targeted industry exemptions.

Discussion ensued regarding Sarasota County referendum, the 2 month gap between the sunsetting date and referendum vote, and November 3, 2020 date for the County referendum.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Carusone, seconded by Vice Mayor Luke, to approve the new business exemption as created statutorily moving forward with the referendum at the same time as the County. The motion carried by the following vote:***

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

Discussion continued regarding developing a process for businesses applying for an exemption, and current State and County process and application for business exemptions.

## **9. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS:**

Mayor McDowell, and Commissioners Carusone, Emrich and Hanks had nothing to report.

Vice Mayor Luke noted that Commissioners will be receiving 2 tickets for the Snow Bird Baseball and if a Commissioner attends a game on February 5, 2020, they will be asked to throw the first pitch, the Braves North Port Night is being held on March 24, 2020 with tickets being purchased at the stadium.

## **10. ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL REPORTS:**

City Attorney Slayton and Interim City Clerk had nothing to report.

Recess was taken from 3:45 p.m. to 4:02 p.m.

## **7. PROCLAMATIONS AND RECOGNITIONS: TIME CERTAIN AT 4:00 P.M.**

- A. [20-1717](#) Proclamation in Recognition of Lee Sullivan  
***Commission presented the proclamation.***
- B. [20-1808](#) Proclaim February 21, 2020 as Gary Sinise Foundation Day  
***Commission presented the proclamation.***  
***Commission presented a Certificate of Appreciation to the family of James Bonsky.***
- C. [20-1752](#) Commemorate 2020 as the Warm Mineral Springs / Little Salt Spring Archaeological Society 30th Anniversary  
***Commission presented the proclamation.***
- D. [20-1747](#) Special Recognition to Ms. Donna Suggs and Her Efforts in Decorating City Hall  
***Ms. Branco and Commission presented the special recognition plaque.***

**8. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There was no public comment.

**11. ADJOURNMENT:**

Mayor McDowell adjourned the meeting at 4:26 p.m.

City of North Port, Florida

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Debbie McDowell, Mayor

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

Minutes approved at the Commission Regular Meeting this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.