

A regular meeting of the City Commission of the City of Apalachicola was held on Tuesday, May 6, 2014 at 6:00 PM at the Apalachicola Community Center, #1 Bay Avenue, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Van Johnson, Commissioner Jimmy Elliott, Commissioner Mitchell Bartley, Commissioner Frank Cook, City Administrator Betty Webb, City Clerk Lee Mathes, Chief of Police Bobby Varnes, City Attorney Pat Floyd

Visitors: Sally Williamson, Mark Curenton, Anita Grove, Dot Crozier, Geoffrey Hewell, George Watkins, Ralph Richards, Huey Page, Liz Kelsey, Jim Harris, Ann Harris, Johnny Harris, Greg Harris, Bobby Miller, Jim Bacharach, George Coon, Caty Greene, Susan Macken, Carrie Jones, Margie Solomon, Themo Patriotis, Carrie Kienzle, Susan Clementson, David Adlerstein, Brent Mabrey, Bonnie Jones, Harrison Jones, Helen Willis-Escobar, Clarice Powell, Sandie Hengel, Gail Johnson, Leon O'Neal, Jerry Webber, Beth Wright, Nellree Layne, Michael Shuler, Steve Watkins, Charles Pace, Martha Pace, Dan Tonsmeire

Regular meeting opened Mayor Johnson followed by prayer and pledge.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

1. George Watkins – 7th Street Gate Closure

Mr. Watkins approached the Commission asking that the 7th Street gate be reopened. Mr. Watkins stated that is the primary entrance to the Department of Agriculture building, the Fire Department requires access to that road, and people access Scipio Creek using that road. Mr. Watkins recommends the Commission send a letter to the State stating the Commission has voted unanimously to reopen the gate on a permanent basis.

Clarice Powell stated she is the one who requested the gate be closed. Ms. Powell stated she had asked that removable posts be installed to allow foot traffic but stop vehicle traffic. Ms. Powell stated she has talked with several members of the Fire Department and all have stated that closing the road was not a safety issue. Ms. Powell stated the purpose she requested the gate be closed was because the commercial traffic had increased significantly and people would go around the speed bumps. Ms. Powell stated she would like for the gate to remain closed to everyday vehicle traffic, but is in favor of removable posts.

Ralph Richards stated during a storm, 7th Street is the way boaters have access to Scipio Creek and would like the gate reopened.

Citizen's comments received.

Bobby Miller stated people can't customize things to fit their needs. If speeding is an issue then that is a law enforcement issue.

George Coon stated this issue was discussed at the Community Pride meeting. Mr. Coon stated there needs to be a plan for all speed bumps and stop signs throughout the City.

Citizen's comments received.

Mayor Johnson stated that Fire Chief Watkins feels that leaving the road closed is a safety issue.

Ms. Webb submitted Community Pride report to Commission. Ms. Webb stated the decision concluded at the meeting was that the City does not need to block entry into State or other property owned by others. Ms. Webb stated the State owns the property that is in question.

Motion to write letter to State asking them to install a coded gate so emergency vehicles can gain access made by Commissioner Elliott.

Mayor Johnson asked what about ordinary citizens. Mayor Johnson requests the gate be permanently opened.

Motion died for lack of second.

Motion to write letter to State asking them to permanently open the gate at end of 7th Street made by Commissioner Elliott, second by Commissioner Bartley.

Citizen's comments received.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Elliott, Bartley, Cook, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

2. Forgotten Coast Paddle Club – Paddle Jam 2014

Themo Patriotis outlined activities for Paddle Jam 2014 to be held May 16th & 17th in the Battery Park area. Proceeds from the event go back to the Forgotten Coast Paddle Club which promotes outreach ministries.

Mayor Johnson stated Mr. Patriotis is basically requesting Commission support. Mayor Johnson stated this event will benefit the community.

Chief Varnes asked Mr. Patriotis if security had been addressed.

Mr. Patriotis stated he will need to address security issues with both Chief Varnes and Sheriff Mock.

Discussion held and citizen's comments received regarding closing Battery Park boat ramp for kayak launching, security issues, and gate closures.

Commissioner Bartley asked if there was going to be camping in the park area.

Mr. Patriotis stated there may be a few campers. Mr. Patriotis stated that people will be staying in local hotels, eating in local restaurants, and shopping in the local stores. It will be a great economic boost to the community.

Discussion continued.

Mayor Johnson recommends that Mr. Patriotis coordinate with Ms. Webb and Chief Varnes and work out details.

3. Main Street Program – Jim Bachrach – Acceptance of DOT Funds

Mr. Bachrach stated that Main Street has been assisting the City with downtown streetscape projects. DOT has given the County \$20,000 for landscape projects, and the County would like to transfer those funds over to the City to combine with the current \$100,000 DOT project. The \$20,000 will be used to landscape the around the City signs at both entrances to the City.

Motion to accept the \$20,000 DOT funds from the County and administer the project made by Commissioner Cook, second by Commissioner Bartley.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Bartley, Cook, Elliott, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

12th Street County paving project was discussed.

Mark Curenton stated the drainage problem with the built up asphalt will be addressed and taken care of.

Mayor Johnson stated that a citizen tripped on the asphalt by edge of the road.

Mr. Curenton stated that those problems will be taken care of.

4. Main Street Program – Jim Bachrach – Recommend CRA Member

Mr. Bachrach stated that Main Street recommends Tom Morgan fill Main Street seat on CRA Board.

Motion to appoint Tom Morgan to CRA Board to fill Main Street seat made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Cook, Elliott, Bartley, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

Anita Grove stated the change was made to make the C2 seat residential or business. The City might need to advertise for that vacancy once more so people are aware of the change.

Ms. Webb stated it would be appropriate to advertise for that seat once more.

5. Mark Curenton – Chesnut Cemetery Preservation Grant Application

Mr. Curenton stated on behalf of the Apalachicola Historical Society, he requests assistance for City to administer a \$18,000 non-match grant for Chesnut Cemetery. Mr. Curenton stated he would write the grant, but the City would be the applicant.

Mayor Johnson asked if the City could allow the Historical Society to administer the grant.

Ms. Webb stated the Historical Society does not have the necessary staff, but the City will work closely with the Historical Society.

Motion to authorize Mr. Curenton to proceed with \$18,000 grant for Chesnut Cemetery made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Elliott, Bartley, Cook, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

6. Anita Grove – St. Vincent Parking

Ms. Grove stated St. Vincent Wildlife is not renewing lease at Harbor House, and is looking to rent space at Chamber of Commerce. St. Vincent is requiring designated parking area.

Ms. Webb stated she does see a problem with designating 5 parking spaces across from the Chamber.

Commissioner Cook stated that St. Vincent might be able to work out parking with the owners of the old Ford place.

Commissioner Bartley asked if City could make parking lot out of old Fire Station.

Mayor Johnson stated he sees no problem with the City allocating parking spaces.

Motion to allocate designated parking spaces for St. Vincent in proximity to Chamber building made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Bartley, Elliott, Cook, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

7. Mayor Johnson – Youth Program

Mayor Johnson stated he has met with Helen Escobar regarding Kids United Together youth program. Mayor Johnson stated that Ms. Escobar has a desire to manage and operate the youth program at the gym. Ms. Escobar is providing the labor the repair the gym roof with the City providing the materials. Mayor Johnson recommends the City partner with Kids United Together organization, and appropriate recreational program funds to help fund program.

Ms. Webb stated she would like to try to coordinate so this program will work with Project Impact.

Motion to authorize Ms. Escobar to proceed with youth program with City allocating recreation program funds to help fund program made by Commissioner Cook, second by Commissioner Bartley.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Elliott, Cook, Bartley, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve April minutes made by Commissioner Cook, second by Commissioner Bartley.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Cook, Bartley, Elliott, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

PLANNING & ZONING

Motion to confirm February and March Planning & Zoning minutes made by Commissioner Cook, second by Commissioner Bartley.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Bartley, Elliott, Cook, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

1. Code Enforcement – Ms. Webb stated that Wilbur Bellew is now a certified code enforcement officer, and the City needs to adopt Florida Statute 162 relating to code enforcement.

Mayor Johnson asked if this would have to be part of an ordinance.

Attorney Floyd stated he would need to review that to see if it needed to be an ordinance.

Motion to adopt Florida Statute 162 contingent upon Attorney Floyd review made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Elliott, Cook, Bartley, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

2. CDBG Project – Ms. Webb stated that approximately \$24,000 will be left over from Streetscape Project. The monies will be used to purchase benches, trash cans, smoker receptacles, and trees.

Motion to authorize purchase and outlined by Ms. Webb made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Cook, Bartley, Elliott, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

3. Historic Preservation Grant – Ms. Webb stated she needs authorization to apply for \$350,000 Historic Preservation Grant to do renovations to Williamson property. Ms. Webb stated that George Kirvin Floyd will do partnership regarding this property.

Motion to authorize Ms. Webb to apply for \$350,000 Historic Preservation Grant to do renovations to Williamson property made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Bartley, Elliott, Cook, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

4. ANERR Building – Ms. Webb stated since St. Vincent will not be moving into the building, she has been approached by University of Florida to take possession of the building. Ms. Webb recommends instead of leasing building to deed it to University of Florida. Ownership will still revert back to City once building is vacated by University of Florida.

Motion to deed ANERR building to University of Florida for the period University of Florida occupies building with ownership reverting back to City once vacated by University of Florida made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Elliott, Cook, Bartley, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

Ms. Webb stated they have more avenues for funding if they have ownership of the building.

5. Blueway Sign – Ms. Webb stated Beverly Hewitt has purchased a Blueway sign, and she would like to display it in Battery Park area for Paddle Jam event.

6. Community Pride – Ms. Webb outlined results of April 29th Community Pride meeting. Ms. Webb stated a request has been put in to install stop sign at Avenue F & 11th Street. Per Community Pride discussion, Ms. Webb recommends to send notices to surrounding property owners and get input before installation. Ms. Webb stated majority of those in attendance to meeting felt the City doesn't need any more speed bumps, and take up the existing speed bumps. Also, recommendations were made for a professional traffic study be conducted to address stop signs, speed bumps, speed, and parking. The majority was in favor of leaving the intersections of Commerce Street at Avenue D and E the same instead of making them 4-way stops. Ms. Webb stated she has to investigate funding for the Traffic Study and signs that show vehicle speed.

Motion to send notices out to surrounding property owners regarding installing stop sign at Avenue F & 11th Street made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Cook, Bartley, Elliott, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

7. Street/Public Works Departments – Ms. Webb stated she has had a discussion with both Greg Harris and Robert Osburn about merging the two departments making one Public Works Operations department. Ms. Webb recommends promoting Greg Harris to Public Works Operations Superintendent with a \$8,000 pay increase and promoting Robert Osburn to Public Works Operations Manager with a \$4,000 pay increase. Ms. Webb also recommends reallocating the \$80,000 LOGT funds for purchasing a building for the Street Department to purchasing two trucks, one for Greg Harris and one for Robert Osburn. Ms. Webb stated the current Public Works building is also in need of repair.

Ms. Webb further stated that Johnny Harris will take instructions directly from Greg Harris and John Layne and Greg Chancey can both be used as backup.

Motion to authorize Ms. Webb to proceed with merging Street and Public Works Departments and make recommended changes and purchases as outlined by Ms. Webb made by Commissioner Elliott, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Bartley, Elliott, Cook, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

8. Motion to authorize payment for Attorney Floyd invoice made by Commissioner Bartley, second by Commissioner Cook.

Motion carried 4 to 0.

Voting Aye: Elliott, Cook, Bartley, Mayor Johnson

Voting Nay: None

ATTORNEY FLOYD REPORT

Attorney Floyd stated he has prepared letter to Waste Pro and is ready to be sent.

OTHER VISITORS & COMMENTS

1. Marjorie Solomon stated Weems Hospital will be holding a fundraiser in Battery Park this Saturday. Everyone is welcome to attend.

2. Dan Tonsmeire stated the Riverkeepers is working with FWC on doing potential restoration projects up the river.

3. George Watkins asked if Scipio Creek Project was moving along.

Ms. Webb stated everything is moving along on schedule.

MAYOR & COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

1. Commissioner Elliott suggested the property underneath the bridge could be used to launch kayaks if permission was given.

2. Commissioner Bartley requested a letter be written to Mediacom regarding the recent change in local channels.

There being no further business, meeting adjourned.

Van W. Johnson, Sr., Mayor

Lee H. Mathes, City Clerk

