

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

City Commission Special Meeting
Monday, February 28, 2022

The City Commission met in formal session Monday, February 28, 2022, at 4:00 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Tracy Upchurch, and the following were present:

1. Roll Call: Tracy Upchurch, Mayor/City Commissioner
Nancy Sikes-Kline, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner
Roxanne Horvath, City Commissioner
John Valdes, City Commissioner
Barbara Blonder, City Commissioner

Also Present: John Regan, City Manager
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Darlene Galambos, City Clerk
Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager
David Birchim, Assistant City Manager
Mark Simpson, Director, Financial Services
Gregory Johnson, Deputy Director, Financial Services
Jim Piggot, Director, General Services
Reuben Franklin, Director, Public Works
Todd Grant, Director, Utilities
Melissa Wissel, Communications Manager
Jennifer Michaux, Police Chief
Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief
Laura Morse, Recording Secretary

Mayor Upchurch introduced the meeting topic which focused on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocation, and staff recommendations on appropriate expenditure of the funds. He advised the Commission was under no pressure to vote, which could be continued to another meeting; however, City staff was ready to receive instructions if they voted. He said if time permitted, additional public comment would be allowed at the end of the meeting.

2. General Public Comments

Public comment was opened, and the Commission heard from the following member of the public:

- Malinda Everson

Public comment was closed.

3. Staff Presentation

Gregory Johnson, Deputy Director, Financial Services, cited the nearly eight million in ARPA funds of which half the City had received, with the other half expected in April. He noted the projects considered and projects that did not make the list, and the four categories where ARPA monies could be spent, which included proposed projects for *Water / Sewer Infrastructure*, *Cyber Security Infrastructure*, *Replacement of Public Sector Revenue* and *Public Comment for ARPA uses*. He said there were ARPA regulations under *Water / Sewer Infrastructure* which required that entities show attempts to provide a portion of the

funding to underprivileged areas, and the West Augustine Septic to Sewer Conversion fit this requirement. He stated the *Replacement of Public Sector Revenue* allowed flexibility to cover the City's non-loss of money during COVID; however, the rate which revenue increased was significantly decreased. He said the approved street sweepers were ordered and should be received in March and August. He concluded if the Commission agreed to move forward with the plan, any substance changes, such as cost increases or plan changes, would be brought back to them.

4. Commission Discussion

Mayor Upchurch thanked Mr. Johnson and Financial Services for their work. He stated that *Public Comment for ARPA uses* mirrored the Commission's concerns and would remain as community needs requiring attention in the future if they were not funded. He requested discussion on the following:

- Questioned conversations and cost for exterior repairs on the *Lightner Building Window, Structure, and Roof repairs*
- Asked about envisioned scale, practicality, and cost effectiveness of *Phase in, electric vehicles for the City fleet*
- Questioned *Funding to reduce homelessness*; the need would not go away anytime soon, there would be a gap in available homeless housing, and the City required a response to a housing alternative with focus on emergency low entry type sheltering
- Concerned with the *Improvements to the Recycling program*

Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager, said the Lightner Building's roof and other aspects were under review, along with Pena Peck House and other historical buildings, and the historic preservation funds annually transferred from the Visitor Information Center (VIC) would be used to

focus on those projects instead of ARPA funds.

Ms. Breidenstein stated a few electric vehicles were targeted for parking enforcement, and a pilot program was completed for fleet alternative fuel types; however, a decision had not been made to move forward based on cost, and ARPA funds should not be used for fleet replacement based on the amount received.

Commissioner Horvath requested a status of the *Training and Police Department professional mental health staff* or adding a non-police staff member. She was advised by City management this was reviewed through the budgeting process, and the focus with ARPA money was one time spends and not items that incurred annual operating costs.

Commissioner Sikes-Kline questioned how this was reviewed through the lens of the City's Vision Plan and Core Values.

Mr. Regan stated items categorically mapped to the Strategic Plan then to the Vision Plan. He reviewed good governance objectives and provided examples, and he noted the *Replacement of Public Sector Revenue* were things that fundamentally drove core values, objectives, and the plan in environmental stewardship. He said reliability in solid waste was a critical element of protecting public health and environmental standards and all Vision concepts regarding a state of wellness.

Commissioner Sikes-Kline said this was weighted heavily on the *Delivery of Core Services*. She asked which projects specifically addressed affordable housing and homelessness. She sought a bigger perspective and comprehensive view of the many moving parts and proposed projects and was pleased things were starting to move. She questioned public safety and cyber security dollars which affected bonding capacity, police take home vehicles, resiliency infrastructure dollars that

benefitted West Augustine, and said fitting these into ARPA requirements was questionable.

Mr. Regan reviewed the following:

- Took a different facet of homelessness at each meeting for discussion
- Absence of home capacity in continuum of care spectrum would be seen
- Looked at developing 80 acres for workforce housing with the County, along with components such as a designed charet process, environmental, trails and parks, and low barrier to entry facility
- 80 acres was on the edge of the utility service area, and West Augustine sewage from that area came to the City by a six-inch force main which was at capacity and required a fundamental infrastructure to get to the 80 acres
- County planned to allocate some ARPA money for the 80 acres development of fundamental infrastructure of traffic concurrency and soft costs
- County was using \$3.5 to \$4 million dollars of their ARPA funds to assist with workforce and affordable housing
- West Augustine project had \$2 million dollars associated with it, and \$2.5 million was taken in traditional financing
- Inter-relationship existed between affordable workforce housing, moving people within the continuum of care, and the prospect of building new facilities missing in the low end of the continuum of care
- With outside funding the bonding capacity was opened, \$13 million was brought from the Utility Fund, there was \$2 million not needed for transmission capacity to get to the 80 acres
- West Augustine project would identify through bonding and was the second largest project in West Augustine's history in development of gravity sewer
- City received \$26.5 million in funding for seven major projects through the resiliency competitive grant process

- Upon project completion, other synergistic elements would be reviewed, for example Lake Maria Sanchez had the road tore up which provided the option to reallocate rights of way for bike lanes and lighting

Mr. Regan concluded at the top of ARPA was responding to public health which was the most important category; therefore, any project pertaining water and sewer or septic to sewer conversion was fundamentally about government's mission to provide water and sewer treatment against the world's toughest standards. He said the function of public health was the biggest single reason man's life expectancy was extended and was attributed to the interrelationship discovery of waterborne disease and sanitary collection in 1860s London, and this dwarfed all medical achievements combined in public health.

Mayor Upchurch stated there was a social justice component for citizens to have reliable sewer, breaking dependency on septic tanks, and an overdue quality of life improvement in the community which continued to be raised with each of these projects.

Mr. Regan advised the County considered using their ARPA funds for a health and wellness complex in West Augustine at the intersection of Volusia and King Street, and the City made a commitment at the February 14th meeting to pay the connection fees. He said water and sewer was ready at the location, and the County and City investment through ARPA funds focused on public health and economic impact.

Commissioner Valdes commended City staff for the items selected from a large list of needs. He noted sewer treatment was a low hanging fruit, and low based flood areas with septic tanks should immediately be addressed due to storms and rising seas that ended up in the marshes, such as Oyster Creek which was the most polluted body of water in the City and the outfall to West Augustine's septic systems. He cited

Ferdinand Avenue in South Davis Shores as a street with septic tanks which could be corrected with an inexpensive force main, which he asked to be reviewed. He asked which items on the *Public Comment for ARPA uses* list were in the works, such as electric cars, where they fell in the schedule, and if funding was pending for the items.

Mr. Regan noted as the number of City vehicles and the market changed, they sought to change the fleet and were committed to getting away from fossil fuels. He said the City went to smart cars for traffic enforcement years ago, and they should move towards electric cars; however, they were currently very expensive.

Commissioner Blonder expressed appreciation for citizens who provided comments for the list. She owned an electric vehicle and said the upfront cost was high; however, the maintenance was zero, and she encouraged staff to factor this in. She commended staff for identifying the projects, vetting them through the Commission, and aligning them with ARPA required criteria. She reinforced the environmental importance of street sweepers in terms of water quality, and their importance with flood resiliency since street debris blocked up stormwater pipes and culverts. She asked Todd Grant, Director, Utilities, about the five garbage trucks in service, which were all older than the projected lifetime of five years, and she requested a summary of the plan to replace the three trucks which would not be done with ARPA funds.

Mr. Grant said ARPA money assisted with kickstarting the delay from no reserve balance in solid waste, and with the monthly fee increase recently approved by the Commission, they were hopeful to get a one-to-one replacement on the trucks.

In response to Commissioner Blonder's inquiry about the development of a carbon footprint scorecard, Mr. Grant said Marcus Pinson, City Engineer, had produced a roughly drafted spreadsheet using the water

and wastewater treatment plants which indicated wattage, load, and vehicle types, and should be ready in approximately one month. He said they started with those two plants since they were the largest consumers of electricity and as other energy saving options were implemented, they could see the carbon footprint go down.

Commissioner Blonder said several items from the *Public Comment* list were about sustainability, and she wanted people to know they were working hard on the topic. She thanked Mr. Grant for his efforts.

Mr. Grant stated free residential compost bins should roll out next month, and business recognition for sustainable practices was being reviewed which they were trying to get to the top of the list with other items.

Mr. Regan summated the progress of the *Public Comment for ARPA uses list*:

- Lightner Building was reviewed
- Received grant for last section of seawall at Avenida Menedez which was a work in progress between the Santa Maria and the Marina
- \$13-million-dollar program was ongoing to expand resilience on lift stations which would continue as part of the normal budget process
- Electric cars were discussed
- LED and solar lighting was reviewed for the Nights of Lights and a submittal made through the TDC funding process
- Nothing was being reviewed under the *Assistance to homeowners transitioning to alternative energy sources*
- Discussed raising fees and changing markets under *Improvements to recycling*
- If borrowing approved, would go to design on building gravity to sewer systems in Lighthouse Park
- Presentation on Riberia Street would be presented which dealt with the *Traffic calming for downtown*

- City was County advocate for the *Sunshine Bus Program* which was in the County court
- Discussed *Expansion of mental and behavioral health services* with the police department this budget cycle to propose social and psychiatric employees and return sworn officers to the street
- Police department had an incredible training program which dealt heavily with mental health
- There was an ongoing initiative at every Commission meeting on how to address the *Funding to reduce homelessness*
- Discussed putting 80 acres into the *Multiyear funding for affordable housing*
- West Augustine sewer improvement was outside the City; however, the design element for Ferdinand, Lighthouse, and Park Terrace Drive were within City limits and could be expanded
- Emergency shelters were private and the City did not handle any *Life / Safety Improvements during high demand*; however, the City provided funding to the St. Francis House
- City was applicant for a CDBG grant to improve resiliency at the St. Francis House, which demonstrated support for 24-hour shelter renovation

Mayor Upchurch opened public comment, and the Commission heard from the following member of the public:

- Mattie Raiford Harms

Public comment was closed.

Commissioner Valdes questioned which listed items could be funded from other places, whether there was a better way, and what the timeline might be.

Mayor Upchurch stated the Commission was positioned to legally vote, or the decision could be continued to a future date.

Commissioner Sikes-Kline indicated the Commission had not made multi-million-dollar decisions at prior workshops, and she would be more comfortable with making the decision at a regular Commission meeting.

MOTION

Commissioner Sikes-Kline MOVED that this matter be on the agenda for the next regular meeting. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Horvath.

VOTE ON MOTION:

AYES: Sikes-Kline, Horvath, Blonder, Valdes, Upchurch

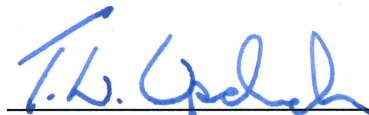
NAYES: None

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

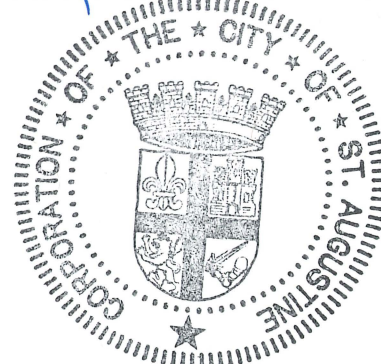
Mayor Upchurch restated the matter would be addressed at the next Commission meeting which allowed time for public review. He expressed appreciation for Mr. Johnson, Ms. Breidenstein, and City staff.

5. Adjourn.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 P.M.¹


Tracy Upchurch, MAYOR


Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



¹ Transcribed by Laura Morse