

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

City Commission Special Meeting Thursday, May 2, 2019

The City Commission met in formal session Thursday, May 2, 2019 at 8:30 A.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Tracy W. Upchurch, and the following were present:

1. Roll Call: Tracy W. Upchurch, Mayor/City Commissioner
Leanna S.A. Freeman, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner
Roxanne Horvath, City Commissioner
John Valdes, City Commissioner

Absent: Nancy Sikes-Kline, City Commissioner (excused)

John Regan, City Manager
Timothy A. Burchfield, Assistant City Manager
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, Recording
David Birchim, Director, Planning and Building
Jim Piggott, General Services Director
Mike Cullum, Director, Public Works
Mark Litzinger, Director, Financial Services
Meredith Breidenstein, Director, Budget & Performance Management
Paul K. Williamson, Director, Public Affairs
Barry Fox, Police Chief

2. General Public Comments

The Commissioners heard from the following members of the public:

B. J. Kalaidi spoke regarding priorities that had been set by the commission over the years. She felt that the priorities were wishes rather than needs. She stated that funding public transportation was more important than providing automobile charging stations.

3. Overview of Mid-Year Budget Analysis, Citizen Survey Results and Strategic Plan Discussion and Update.

John Regan, City Manager, stated that St. Johns County requested funding in the amount of \$126,000 to cover a shortfall for the Sunshine Bus. He said there would be

further discussions regarding the City's contributions.

Mr. Regan reviewed the citizen survey questions and how they would be applied to Strategic planning.

Meredith Breidenstein, Budget and Performance Management Director, presented the budget analysis for each fund and reviewed the status.¹

Mayor Upchurch questioned the current reserve balance for the General Fund.

Ms. Breidenstein replied that the balance was \$284,000 above the four-month reserve level of approximately \$8.5 million that the City maintained for emergencies.

¹ Presentation attached to original minutes

Mr. Regan pointed out that other funds also maintained minimum balances to operate for three months.

Ms. Breidenstein stated that although Utility Fund revenues were higher than anticipated, those funds were placed in reserve for future capital plans.

Ms. Breidenstein discussed funding the hurricane damage and how to fund future flood mitigation. She said revenue projections were very conservative. She explained the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursement process.

Mayor Upchurch questioned staffing for Public Works and how difficult it was to hire and maintain employees for certain positions.

Mr. Regan stated that day labor was utilized for some positions and when there were employee absences. He said hiring and keeping employees was challenging.

Ms. Breidenstein advised that FEMA had approved reimbursement for the marina and the funds were obligated but had not been received. She also noted that the marina was completely operational.

Mr. Regan expressed appreciation for staff efforts to obtain FEMA reimbursement for the damages that occurred to the marina during two recent hurricanes.

Ms. Breidenstein stated that the Historic Downtown Parking Facility revenues were higher than anticipated, as were expenditures. She said that increased parking required staffing adjustments.

Citizen Survey Results

Ms. Breidenstein reviewed the process of how the survey was conducted and measured against other communities nationally. She noted a 35% response rate for mailed surveys.

Ms. Breidenstein continued that all of the communities that were measured and compared were included in the appendices. She said the three areas that the City rated higher were a vibrant downtown commercial area, stocked supplies in preparation for an emergency and opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities. She also noted the areas where the city scored lower.

Commissioner Freeman questioned the reason drinking water was lower and how it should be addressed.

Mr. Regan stated that historically the city had issues with red water but had nearly eliminated all issues. He felt that it was mostly a perception problem. He further noted that the water in Florida was typically hard water.

Commissioner Valdes agreed and stated that people drank bottled water because the general perception was that tap water was inferior.

Ms. Breidenstein continued the survey review. She noted the overall results and felt they were positive. She encouraged the commission to review that part of the report in detail because it was a summary of the entire survey.

Commissioner Freeman stated that there were discussions on how to increase participation. She felt that there should be a shorter survey on main key issues that could be made available to all residents, specifically when the City was facing tough challenges.

Commissioner Valdes agreed that it would be helpful to have comprehensive input when there were "hot topics."

Mr. Regan said he was surprised regarding the responses related to vacation rentals. He stated that careful consideration should

be given when further discussions occur with regulating vacation rentals.

Commissioner Freeman agreed that having a deep understanding of how the majority of residents feel would be helpful on how to handle the issue.

Commissioner Valdes suggested using social media to conduct a survey.

Ms. Lopez cautioned that using social media meant non-residents could participate.

Mr. Regan stated that staff had been discussing ways to develop methods to fund future land acquisition since 74% of those surveyed indicated its importance.

Mayor Upchurch said land acquisition should be discussed with the county given the county's large footprint and the city's small one, and the small amount of undeveloped land in the city as opposed to the county.

Strategic Plan

Mr. Regan stated that the City's Vision Plan did not change and was the driving document for Strategic Plan development. He reviewed the table of contents and objectives.

Mr. Regan said Commissioner Sikes-Kline asked him to relay her interest to focus on structural racism issues.

Commissioner Horvath questioned whether the City had any plans to celebrate 400 years of the African American impact on the nation.

Mr. Regan stated there was a piece of legislation addressed to the state of Virginia regarding goals to celebrate the anniversary that was very similar to the language created for the City's 450th celebration. He said there was no federal funding and minimal activity at present for

the project. He also said that any activities planned would need to be considered during the budget process.

Commissioner Freeman suggested creating a committee that could include rotating commissioners, employees, and members of the African American community as a starting point.

Commissioner Valdes felt that racial relationships had improved; however, social media had been a setback. He agreed that a committee could be a positive start.

Further discussion ensued regarding the city's proactivity in racial relationships and history.

Mayor Upchurch stated that there were many race issues that could not be solved by the city. He said the city could readily address structural racism issues and felt that a positive discussion could be held with correct guidance. He said Florida's upcoming 200th anniversary of becoming a territory could be an optimal opportunity to create educational programming and a deeper understanding of slavery and African American history.

Ms. Lopez suggested highlighting the difference between Native Americans and African American slavery.

Mr. Regan suggested a commemoration with an emphasis on human rights to help educate with a goal of creating compassion in an effort to reduce structural racism issues.

Mayor Upchurch felt that the human rights might not fit into a commemoration; however, further discussion would be helpful.

Branding and the City Seal

Mayor Upchurch felt that the City's branding was inconsistent and creating a solid consistent brand was important.

Commissioner Freeman stated that a branding exercise was conducted during the 450th Commemoration. She agreed branding should be consistent.

Ms. Lopez stated that the City's seal was protected under statute. She said the 450th Commemoration logo was trademarked and therefore, protected.

Mayor Upchurch requested that staff come back with a recommendation for consistent branding.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the presentation and survey.

4. Adjournment

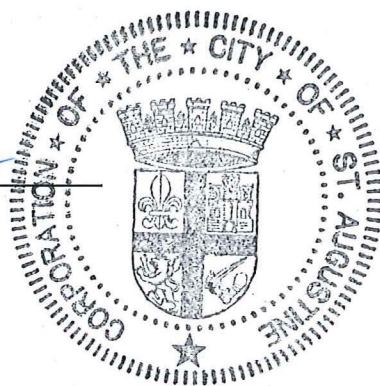
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:07 A.M.²



Tracy W. Upchurch, MAYOR



Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



² Transcribed by Robin DiAngelis