CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Regular City Commission Meeting
Tuesday, November 12, 2024

The City Commission met in formal session Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 5:00 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Vice-Mayor Roxanne Horvath, and the following were present:

**1. Roll Call:** Roxanne Horvath, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner
Barbara Blonder, City Commissioner
Cynthia Garris, City Commissioner
Jim Springfield, City Commissioner

Absent: Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor/City Commissioner

Also Present: David Birchim, City Manager
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Darlene Galambos, City Clerk
Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager
Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager
Melissa Burns, Director, Finance
Stephen Slaughter, Director, Public Works & Utilities
Amy Skinner, Director, Planning and Building
Melissa Wissel, Director, Communications
Jennifer Michaux, Police Chief
Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief
Elyse Wiemann, Recording Secretary

**MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Horvath requested a moment of silence and Commissioner Blonder led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

**2.A. Modification and Approval of Regular Agenda**

**MOTION**

**Vice-Mayor Horvath MOVED to approve the Regular Agenda. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Blonder and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

**3. Special Presentations, Recognitions and Proclamations**

**3.A. Recognition and Appreciation of Commissioner Horvath for her efforts and contributions during her tenure as a City Commissioner by the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC). (B. Blonder, City Commissioner)**

**3.B. Proclamation 2024-34: Proclaims the month of November 2024 as Monarch Butterfly Month in the City of St. Augustine. (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)**

**4. General Public Comments (3 minutes per individual)**

The Commission heard from the following members of the public:

- John Petrow
- Roger White
- Nancy Murphy
- Robin Thomas
- Colette B. Oldham
- Brooke Cantu
- Debra Campbell
- Debra Alexander
- John Regan
- Scott York
- Alanna Pisarek
- BJ Kalaidi

**5. Consent Agenda**

David Birchim, City Manager, read the Consent Agenda.

CA.1. Preview of upcoming Commission meetings.

CA.2. THE FOLLOWING ORDINANCES ARE TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR SECOND READING ON DATE: NONE.

CA.3. Reminder of Upcoming Meetings:
- December 2, 2024, 7:30PM Special City Commission Meeting
- December 9, 2024, 5:00PM City Commission Meeting
- January 13, 2025, 5:00PM City Commission Meeting
- January 27, 2025, 5:00PM City Commission Meeting

CA.4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR COMMISSION MEETINGS:
- October 14, 2024, Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.5. RELEASES OF LIEN FOR UNIT CONNECTION FEE MORTGAGE(S):
- 637 Center St-Tina Renee Crews

CA.6. PROPOSED PROCLAMATIONS, CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION/RECOGNITION. (COMMISSION APPROVAL REQUIRED). (TO BE READ AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING). NONE.

CA.7. NOTIFICATION OF PROCLAMATIONS/CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION ISSUED: NONE.

CA.8. 2023-2024 Annual Status Report- City Attorney's Office (I. Lopez, City Attorney)
CA.9. FY 2023/2024 Carry-Forward Requests. (M. Burns, Director Financial Services)

CA.10. Nomination of Forson Family for the 2025 De Aviles Award. (J. Springfield, Commissioner)

End Consent Agenda

**<u>5.A.</u> Additions, deletions or modifications to Consent Agenda**

(None)

**<u>5.B.</u> Approval of Consent Agenda**

**MOTION**

**Commissioner Springfield MOVED to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Garris and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

**6. Appeals**

(None)

**7. General Public Presentations, Items of Great Public Importance, and Other Items Requiring Public Hearings**

**<u>7.A.</u> General Public Presentations**

**7.A.1.2024 Sing Out Loud Festival Recap by SJC Cultural Events, Inc. (M. Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager)**

Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager, introduced Dianya Markovitz from the St. Johns County Cultural Events to provide a brief recap of the Sing Out Loud Festival.

Dianya Markovitz, Cultural Affairs Manager, St. Johns Cultural Events provided a brief overview of the events that took place during the 2024 Sing Out Loud Festival. She provided a synopsis of the events that took place during the month of September and the benefits the event provided to the community. She presented the City with a donation of $80,120 that was raised for the City of St. Augustine's Conservation Program.

Commissioner Springfield said that 2023 was the first year that the event was major and the City suffered with employee burn out. He asked what took place this year.

Ms. Breidenstein replied that some City staff worked during the event; however, most was able to be outsourced. She said the public works and solid waste departments were able to stay on their regular schedules, but the City Police and Fire department remained the same.

Commissioner Springfield said the hotel occupancy had not increase significantly but asked if there was a projection as to when there may be a substantial change.

Ms. Markovitz said the other weekends in September were starting to increase. She said it took a while to build the Live Wildly Showcase name and normally in year three was the brand awareness; however, she did not have an exact timeline.

Commissioner Springfield said he was pleased that the community was benefiting from the showcase; however, he reminded everyone that the City did not received a lot of money from the event. He said the taxes went to the state and the City received a portion of the money based on the population.

Commissioner Garris said there was a hurricane threat last year in September and many hotels lost revenue but with the Sing Out Loud event, it helped increase the revenue and helped them turn a profit.

**<u>7.B.</u> Items of Great Public Importance**

(None)

**<u>7.C.</u> Other Items Requiring Public Hearing**

(None)

**8. Ordinances and Resolutions – Public Hearing Required.**

**<u>8.A.</u> Ordinances – Second Reading**

(None)

**<u>8.B.</u> Ordinances – First Reading (only if required by law)**

(None)

**<u>8.C.</u> Resolutions – Public Hearing (only if required by law)**

(None)

**9. Ordinances and Resolutions - No Public Hearing Required**

**<u>9.A.</u> Ordinances – First Reading**

(None)

**<u>9.B.</u> Resolutions**

**9.B.1. Resolution 2024-42: Authorizes the execution of a grant agreement between the Florida Communities Trust and the City of St. Augustine for reimbursement of purchased land in the Ravenwood Park neighborhood. (R. Franklin, Assistant City Manager)**

Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager, reviewed the Resolution.

Commissioner Horvath said the City had a lot of experience from Fish Island and that would be beneficial.

Commissioner Springfield felt the requirements from the grant were standard and would be done anyway. He said there needed to be a management plan for any property the City had.

Mr. Franklin said this would add a protective layer to the land.

Commissioner Blonder said staff worked very to secure the grant and that helped stretch the City's dollars and thought the extra level of protection was very helpful.

**MOTION**

**Commissioner Springfield MOVED to pass Resolution 2024-42. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Blonder.**

**<u>VOTE ON MOTION</u>:**
**AYES: Springfield, Blonder, Garris, Horvath**
**NAYES: NONE**
**MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

**9.B.2. Resolution 2024-43: Authorizes the purchase of 500 Anastasia Blvd and City Manager David Birchim to act as the City Representative for the transaction. (D. Birchim, City Manager)**

David Birchim, City Manager reviewed the Resolution. He explained the resolution was to purchase 500 Anastasia Boulevard for the new fire station. He said the purchase price was $4 million dollars; however, the appraised value was $3.8 million dollars. He said the City had received $750,000 from the state for design and engineering. He said the City would be pursuing money from the state to help build the fire station. He said the seller wished to lease the property back from the City for up to twenty-four months. He said the vision for the facility, besides daily use as a fire station, was to act as the center of emergency preparedness for the neighborhoods on Anastasia Island, and it would include a community meeting room.

Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager, provided more information on how the proposed fire department could be funded.

Chief Carlos Avilés, City of St. Augustine Fire Department reviewed the Insurance Service Office rating (ISO) and that was evaluated every five years. He said that had been completed within the past twelve months. He said they did not expect any adverse changes based on the new site location.

Commissioner Garris questioned if there would be a way for the fire trucks to exit the facility when the bridge was up. She said there was a lot of traffic and thought it would be difficult.

Chief Avilés replied that would be address through design and a traffic control device could be installed with coordination from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). He said they did not anticipate this being an issue for FDOT.

Commissioner Blonder asked how having the top tier of an ISO rating could impact homeowner's insurance.

Chief Avilés replied that the ISO rating helped with how insurance was calculated. He said being within five miles of a fire station it would allow homeowners more opportunities when searching for insurance companies.

Commissioner Blonder said with the insurance challenges that most have, having more opportunities for better homeowners' insurance was very important.

Commissioner Springfield asked how many people attended the community meeting held on November 7, 2024.

Mr. Birchim replied that eight people attended the meeting.

Reuben Franklin, Assistance City Manager spoke about the strategy on how the fire station location was chosen. He said they had viewed different sites, but this was the best option as others had fallen through.

Commissioner Horvath said there was no doubt the City needed a new fire station.

Commissioner Springfield replied that he needed to make sure the City had taken the appropriate time to ensure the neighbors were aware of the situation. He said he was in favor of the fire station and more importantly having a disaster recovery center. He said due diligence needed to be done. He said the appraisal at $3.8 million seemed accurate and thought if the City waited a year, the price for the property would be increased over the asking price. He said there was no other property on the island that fit the criteria like 500 Anastasia Boulevard, and this was the City's opportunity. He said traffic was an issue, but it had been addressed and there were two exits so if one was blocked the other could be used. He asked if this could wait or if a decision was necessary tonight.

Mr. Birchim replied that the deadline to sign was tomorrow. He said this had been publicly discussed at the previous City Commission meeting, and then an open house announced at the City Commission meeting took place and most who attended were from Davis Shores. He said he was unsure if the seller would agree to a change in the contract to allow more time and what that could mean for the contract.

Commissioner Garris said a fire station was needed and understood the frustration with the past locations. She said 500 Anastasia Boulevard was more isolated and thought this was the best location that the City could utilize. She was concerned with the sublease and questioned if it would take two years before the fire station could start being built.

Mr. Birchim replied that it was up to two years which was the term of the lease.

Commissioner Garris asked if the design would be completed with the $750,000.

Mr. Birchim said that was correct. He said regarding communication, Melissa Wissel, Communications Director noted information about the fire station was sent out in News and Notes, press releases, extensive news coverage, public announcements, and radio interviews. He explained no money would be exchanged for the twenty-four-month lease back, but the lessee would maintain the property and insurance.

Commissioner Horvath asked if the current owner vacated the property prior to the twenty-four months, the City would take possession and no subletting was allowed.

Mr. Birchim replied that was correct.

Commissioner Blonder said this was a high priority as many complaints had been received about the Red Cox intersection as the fatalities there were a threat. She said the age of the fire station was an issue and there had been an issue with black mold, and thought it was not sustainable as it was. She said with the appraisal being high and paying an extra $200,000 was only five percent and relativity minor for a property that could be in great demand if on the market. She felt the City had done their due diligence and was in support.

Mr. Birchim said they were committed to working with the neighborhoods and the design of the site and building would have to be reviewed by the Corridor Review Committee (CRC).

Commissioner Horvath said the need was great and the improvement at Red Cox Road was necessary and this would allow that to happen. She said having a location to help coordinate through a disaster would be a huge help. She was in support of the project.

**MOTION**

**Commissioner Springfield MOVED to pass Resolution 2024-43. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Blonder.**

**VOTE ON MOTION:**
**AYES: Springfield, Blonder, Garris, Horvath**
**NAYES: NONE**
**MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

**10. Staff Reports and Presentations**

**10.A. Status Report regarding the 2014 Vision Plan Update. (A. Skinner, Planning and Building)**

Amy Skinner, Planning and Building Director provided an update on the 2014 Vision Plan. She said the first three public meetings had the highest turnout; however, the last two were not greatly attended but those attending were very engaged. She said an online survey had been launched to allow more participation from the public. She said the next public meeting would take place in the Alcazar Room at City Hall on November 13, 2024, at 6:00p.m. She said there would be a meeting with the various citizen Boards in December and was looking forward to providing more information to the City Commission in the future.

Commissioner Springfield noted that owner occupied structures increased from 55% to 65%, while increasing the number of short-term rentals. He also noted the demographic had changed.

Mr. Birchim commented that it was the private gated communities, Antigua and Madeira.

Ms. Skinner added there had been a lot of new construction.

Commissioner Blonder noted that in 2010 20.4% of people within the City limits were in poverty and in 2023 it was reduced to 12.6%, and that was something to be proud of especially, with the impact of the pandemic.

**11. ITEMS BY CITY ATTORNEY**

**11.A. City Manager's annual evaluation responses for review and optional discussion. (I. Lopez, City Attorney)**

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney reviewed David Birchim, City Manager's annual evaluation with the Commission.

**11.B. Public Art Contract with Ivan Depeña of Airboat, Inc. d/b/a Depeña Studio for public art at the May Street roundabout. (I. Lopez, City Attorney)**

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney reviewed the public art draft contract with Ivan Depeña for the May Street roundabout. She said the request made by the Commission had been included.

Commissioner Horvath appreciated all the items being added to the contract. She said she hoped for a positive recommendation

Commissioner Springfield said he expressed concerns with the artwork at a prior meeting as there had been concerns from the public; however, it was unanimously approved at the August 26, 2024 meeting. He said he wanted to respect the artist but also the residents. He said he was confident in the artist and hoped to be surprised.

Commissioner Horvath said she was proud of what had been accomplished. She said there had been many public meetings; however, was discouraged by the coverage in the media as there were some discrepancies and misquoting. She said the City had qualified artist, and there were almost 100 submissions. She said she knew not everyone would be in support of the art piece, but she was confident that it would be unique.

Commissioner Garris was not in support of the art piece. She felt this was not the right way to spend the City's money. She knew a lot of work had gone into the art committee. She said many questions about the project had been raised about the amount of money being spent and why a local artist was not selected. She said she was unable to justify the amount of money as the intersection worked fine without a display.

Commissioner Blonder said she respected Commissioner Garris' viewpoint; however, had traveled widely and knew in many other cities public art could help bring the community together. She said this intersection was blighted and had been for the past twenty-five years and had nothing going for it. She said this intersection was much more functional now and would enhance the area. She felt like this was a great investment.

Ms. Lopez said the $250,000 had been budget for the project by the City.

Commissioner Springfield confirmed that the artist, artwork and budget had been approved by the Commission.

Ms. Lopez replied in the affirmative. She said the 'Call for Artist' noted that no piece of art had to be selected. She advised they were not legally obliged to select an art piece. She said the Commission had approved the selection recommended by the Public Art Committee.

Commissioner Springfield asked if the contract could be ended at any time. He said he was unsure but due to his integrity for his previous vote, he would support the project. He said he loved public art during his travels and appreciated the public comments and the City Managers opinion he would support the project.

**MOTION**

**Commissioner Horvath MOVED to approve the contract and move it forward the artist. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Horvath.**

**VOTE ON MOTION:**
**AYES: Horvath, Blonder, Springfield**
**NAYES: Garris**
**MOTION APPROVED 3/1**

**12. ITEMS BY CITY CLERK**

**12.A. Notification of Board Term Expirations-Civil Service Board. (D. Galambos, City Clerk)**

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk informed the Board that there was a term expiration on the Civil Service Board.

**12.B. Notification of Board Term Expiration-St. Augustine Firefighters' Pension Trust Fund. (D. Galambos, City Clerk)**

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk informed the Board that there was a term expiration on the Firefighters' Pension Trust Fund Board.

**13. ITEMS BY CITY MANAGER**

Mr. Birchim thanked Vice-Mayor/ Commissioner Horvath for the service to the community over the past twelve years. He said it had been his pleasure to work with her and be her neighbor and friend.

**14. Items by Mayor and Commissioners**

Commissioner Springfield said he was happy the de Avilés Award was approved for the Forson Family. He acknowledged there was an employee parking problem during Nights of Lights, which was mentioned in public comments. He said he was not in favor of using Francis Field for parking but thought it should be addressed in a creative way. He asked about the passes for the garage and if a parking space was saved for those who had them.

Mr. Birchim replied that passes for the garage were hunting passes. He said he would commit to exploring solutions for employee parking during Nights of Lights.

He said the long-term solution was Broudy's garage and they were working towards that goal.

Commissioner Springfield said he was happy to have had the opportunity to serve with Commissioner Horvath over the past two years.

Commissioner Garris agreed that the parking needed to be looked into. She said using Francis Field was not a good solution for parking, but it was a huge concern. She said it had been delightful to work with Commissioner Horvath. She said she brought a nice flare to the commission. She thanked her for being kind, having grace, and always being helpful to the City. She wished her well in her future endeavors.

Commissioner Blonder thanked the City Fire Department for assisting with a large tree limb that came down on a power line. She said they went above and beyond to help and that was the level of service from the City. She thanked Commissioner Horvath for being a role model and mentor as she was unsure of her role when first elected but had great examples to follow. She thanked Commissioner Horvath for establishing the climate that she walked into which was salability, mutual respect, being able to disagree without rancor and hoped it would carry forward in honor of Commissioner Horvath's work.

Commissioner Horvath thanked the citizens of St. Augustine for allowing her to serve for the past twelve years. She said it was her desire to keep a balance and was proud of her efforts for the 2014 Vision Plan. She thanked her fellow Commissioners she served with over her tenure. She wished her fellow commissioner well in their future serving the City. She thanked City Staff as they were the ones who helped, and their standard of professionalism never dims. She encouraged anyone who wanted to serve in this capacity to do so, as she had learned so much. She said she was proud of the direction the City was moving in and felt the City would continue to be a strong resilience and compassionate City.

**15. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:09 P.M.[1]

Nancy Sikes-Kline, MAYOR

Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK

CORPORATION ★ OF ★ THE ★ CITY ★ OF ★ ST. AUGUSTINE

[1] Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann