

City of Port St. Lucie

City Council / City Staff Retreat

Meeting Minutes

121 SW Port St. Lucie
Blvd.
Port St. Lucie, Florida
34984

Gregory J. Oravec, Mayor

Stephanie Morgan, Councilwoman, District I
Dave Pickett, Councilman, District II
Shannon Martin, Vice Mayor, District III
Jolien Caraballo, Councilwoman, District IV

Friday, February 26, 2021

8:30 AM

**MidFlorida Event Center, 9221 SE
Event Center Pl., Port St. Lucie, FL
34952**

1. Meeting Called to Order

A Special Meeting of the CITY COUNCIL of the City of Port St. Lucie was called to order by Mayor Oravec on February 26, 2021, at 8:30 a.m., at Mid-Florida Credit Union Event Center, 9221 Southeast Event Center Place, Port St. Lucie, Florida.

2. Roll Call

Council Members

Present: Mayor Gregory J. Oravec
Vice Mayor Martin
Councilwoman Caraballo
Councilman Pickett
Councilwoman Morgan

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Public to be Heard

There was nothing heard under this item.

5. Retreat Business Items

5.a Introduction and Presentation of Departmental Strategic
Business Plans

[2021-140](#)

POLICE DEPARTMENT

(Clerk's Note: At this time, a PowerPoint presentation was shown.)

Chief Bolduc presented the Police Department's Business Plan, which

included the future needs and requested staff per Fiscal Year.

Vice Mayor Martin clarified that District 5 would be fully implemented in 22-23, to which Chief Bolduc responded in the affirmative. Vice Mayor Martin asked what the current vacancy rate was, to which Chief Bolduc responded that they had 13 sworn vacancies and 7 civilian vacancies. He added that they had names slotted in each opening, but they were waiting for academy graduations. Councilman Pickett stated that he would like to see a Training Facility and a canine Training Facility materialize.

Vice Mayor Martin stated that she wanted to make sure the plan was implemented when it's supposed to be implemented, otherwise they are going to keep lagging back, to which Mayor Oravec added that the City has always trailed the authorized number of positions.

Councilwoman Caraballo stated that she had an acquaintance, who was former military try to get into the Academy and he ended up going back into the military because it was so difficult. Councilwoman Caraballo stated that community perspective on policing was important and suggested continually growing the Police Explorer Program, so that they can engage with the youth and teach them the benefits of being a Police Officer.

Chief Bolduc stated that IRSC had a program where you can get your two-year degree in criminal justice, then go to the Police Academy. He added that the City sponsored the Explores to attend that program and that they have also expanded the opportunity to the Cadet Program.

Vice Mayor Martin clarified that the City had one Computer Technology Crime Detective, to which Chief Bolduc responded in the affirmative and explained that they were grooming some guys. Vice Mayor Martin stated that she appreciated that they were ramping up their efforts.

Mayor Oravec stated that the City's internal values of continuous improvement is never-ending, and the Business Plan helped the Police Department get better every year. Mayor Oravec stated that they were planning the 2021-22 Budget and inquired how they could go from no Training Facility to building one next year. Mayor Oravec asked how the Training Facility compared to other competing priorities and explained that he has been on the losing end regarding bodycams. Mayor Oravec stated that he was concerned about potentially having a gun range

before they had the accountability of body cams.

Regarding recruiting efforts, Mayor Oravec stated that he supported the notions brought up by Councilwoman Caraballo by reinforcing the Explorers and PAL, as it was a big reason the City invested in those programs because there is a connection for future recruiting and community building. Mayor Oravec stated that he wants the Police force to reflect the diversity of the City. He also stated that he was a big fan of license plate readers and he would like to see one in each District and each gateway to the City. Mayor Oravec thanked Chief Bolduc for all of the increased interactions for traffic enforcement and requested a monthly analysis on Traffic Enforcement. Mayor Oravec stated that he supported the idea of the Training Facility, but he would like it to be part of an orderly process without jumping in front of other competing priorities.

Vice Mayor Martin stated that the Training Facility has been underway for quite sometime and the issue was getting there. She stated that it did need to move forward because it was going to continue to lag behind, and they were a Council that got things done. She added that when they recognize issues, they had the ability to make it happen. Vice Mayor Martin stated that the Chief has brought up body cams in the past and it required additional staffing and funding. She added that they were not against bodycams and neither were the Officers. Vice Mayor Martin stated that the Council needed to make a determination, as she was not going to sacrifice the bodies on the street. She added that records management was the issue regarding the bodycams.

Mayor Oravec asked why Chief Bolduc did not include bodycams in his business plan, to which Chief Bolduc responded that he did think he could. Mayor Oravec asked what the City could do for the community's mental health, to which Chief Bolduc responded that mental health has become a challenge for law enforcement and added that they have been completing soft hand offs to New Horizon's to avoid neighbors being at risk. Chief Bolduc explained that in connection with Neighborhood Services they were drafting a policy, which would contract a third-party service to help mediate neighborhood disputes. Vice Mayor Martin asked Chief Bolduc to have examples of different scenarios when he brings the item forward.

Councilwoman Morgan stated that she would like more information on a Training Facility and that District 5 should be a priority due to the

City's growth. The City manager explained that the next step would be the CIP process and that the Training Facility could be a CIP item. The City Manager stated that the number one priority was District 5 and that they could have a more detailed discussion on the Training Facility.

SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM UPDATE

(Clerk's Note: At this time, a PowerPoint presentation was shown.)

Elijah Wooten, Business Navigator, gave a brief background on his experience and stated that he was appreciative that the Council added 'Support to Small Business' to the Strategic Goals.

Mr. Wooten gave a presentation, which identified the different areas in the City that supports small business, along with additional opportunities. He stated that the small business plan was critical to economic development in Port St. Lucie. Mr. Wooten explained that the vision of a small business plan is to create an environment that nurtures, sustains, and grows small businesses in Port St. Lucie. Mr. Wooten stated that there were about 8,300 active business tax receipts, which included roughly 3700 commercial business tax receipts. According to the Department of Economic Opportunity the City's employment in 2018 was 63,540, which 21,000 were from small businesses with 50 or fewer employees.

Councilwoman Caraballo stated that some 1099 individuals had to file a business tax even though they worked within a commercial entity. She asked if Mr. Wooten kept track of those individuals or if it was just the amount of commercial buildings, to which Mr. Wooten responded that they referenced the active business tax receipts in the system. In reference to the 1099 individuals, the system would count each active license. For example, if a salon had a business tax receipt and 5 stylists with a business tax, then the system would count 6.

Mr. Wooten stated that they offered the Business Accelerator Program, which was a 10-week course conducted by the Small Business Development Center at Indian River State College. He explained that the program was bundled with the small business grant that the City has funded through an allocation of Community Building Block Funding, as well as a matching grant from Center State Bank. Mr. Wooten added that the Business Tax Division also offered a small business workshop,

which was offered throughout the year, but due to the pandemic they did not offer the courses that were normally offered. He explained that the workshops were usually bi-monthly and covered topics that small businesses would be interested in. In terms of management and technical assistance, Mr. Wooten stated that the City funded a full time consultant with the Small Business Development Center and Mike Bernard was available throughout the day to work with businesses.

Mr. Wooten stated that they venture with the Woman's Business Development Center and other groups that worked in conjunction with the EDC to offer technical assistance and help individuals fill out applications or to directly process grant applications through St. Lucie County. Mr. Wooten explained that being a Business Navigator was not just development related, but it was also community related.

Mr. Wooten explained that the Business Tool Kit was a program offered by the Economic Development Council, which identified different programs and resources for small businesses to utilize. Mr. Wooten stated that a number of the City's businesses had to close due to the pandemic and explained that the City added the full business tax list to the City's website for the public to utilize. Mr. Wooten stated that there were recent Ordinances passed, which supported small businesses and added that the Building Department reduced permitting fees.

Mayor Oravec asked how often the 'Before You Sign the Lease' Workshop occurred, to which Mr. Wooten that the workshop occurred quarterly, and that the next one was in May. Mayor Oravec inquired as to how much participation there was at the Workshop, to which Mr. Wooten responded that they usually had 10-15 participants. Mayor Oravec suggested speaking regularly on the different niches of starting a small business and growing a small business.

Mayor Oravec asked Mr. Wooten where he wanted his department to go in the future, to which Mr. Wooten responded that overall, he just wanted to be supportive of small businesses and he thought some of it could be housed within a Business Development Department. Mr. Wooten stated that there were certain segments of the City that were going to have to reinvent themselves or maybe a facelift. He explained that a Commercial Façade Grant would be something to think about as it would help business owners refresh their business. Mr. Wooten added that the City did not have a local response and they had to wait on the Federal Government or the State to help our businesses. He

explained that if there was a consistent funding source, such as a revolving loan program, it could help businesses. Mr. Wooten added that it could be targeted, open to all businesses, or certain business categories. Mr. Wooten stated that there were a number of home based businesses and suggested creating the opportunities for incubator spaces to help the businesses grow before they go out on their own. Mr. Wooten explained that he had a long list of things he would like to see, but he did not know if they were all housed within one department or if they could be added to other departments.

Mayor Oravec stated that he was looking for Mr. Wooten to come up with ideas of how the City could have the very best ecosystem business development. He added that it was important to include retention and expansion. Mayor Oravec stated that he was advocating for Mr. Wooten to educate the Council on best practices on what cities can do to grow their local economies and to come back with that information as the basis for the Strategic Business Plan Proposal that would explain the function, what it could be long-term, and how the City could go about it.

Vice Mayor Martin thanked Mr. Wooten and stated that she would love to hear about the ideas and see what the programs would look like.

Councilwoman Caraballo thanked Mr. Wooten for all of his efforts. She stated that she was very interested in hearing about creating a buy-local concept. Councilwoman Caraballo requested that the best practices include definitions on what other City's considered a home based business.

Mayor Oravec stated that he would like the Business Plan Proposal to include specific strategies on marketing and services provided such as startup seminars and workshops. Mayor Oravec asked the City Manager to provide the Council with the Business Plan Proposal before the Strategic Planning Session.

Councilwoman Morgan stated that she did not think Business Navigator was the correct title for Mr. Wooten, as she felt it was more of an Economic Development title. Mayor Oravec agreed and stated that they should have made the City Manager submit a Strategic Business Plan, three years ago, to explain the function. He explained that the position morphed as things changed over time and they never received an update.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

(Clerk's Note: At this time, a PowerPoint presentation was shown.)

Robert Sweeney, Public Works Director, presented the Public Works Department Strategic Business Plan and explained each goal for the department.

Mayor Oravec suggested having an equipment rodeo for the public to see the different types of equipment that the Public Works Department used, as there was a need for equipment operators, to which Mr. Sweeney responded that it was a great idea and he would work on implementing it. Vice Mayor Martin stated that she had the opportunity to drive a rock truck and it was amazing to see a young guy operating it.

Mr. Sweeney continued his presentation and stated that they were hoping to receive grant funding to install baffle boxes, which would reduce the future amount of sediment encroaching into the waterways, to which Vice Mayor Martin responded that she would like a quarterly list of grants, as it would be helpful in the conversations with the public.

Mr. Sweeney concluded his presentation and Mayor Oravec stated that the Public Works Department was doing a great job, but they needed to figure out St. Lucie West Boulevard and pressure washing. Mayor Oravec added that he looked forward to seeing the budget request for additional staff.

Mayor Oravec stated that they finished strong and requested that the City Manager bring back Facilities, CRA, and Neighborhood Services to a future Special Meeting. Mayor Oravec stated that he would like to change the time of the 3rd Special Meeting and it was consensus of the Council to change the time of the 3rd Special Meeting of the month from 1:30 p.m. to 9:30 a.m.

5.b Retreat Presentation - Septic to Sewer Conversions

[2021-137](#)

Donna Rhoden, Deputy Director, Utilities, presented the Septic-to-Sewer Master Plan, which included an acquisition of the City's utility assets, City policies related to the water and sewer conversion programs, Septic-to-Sewer conversions and related environmental benefits, microbial source tracking, hot spot grant

incentives to increase the number of conversions, the financial limitations related to the 10-year interest free program, and CIP related to system growth and grinder maintenance costs.

Mayor Oravec stated that there were failing systems and homeowners were making the involuntary decision to make the switch, which was also a factor. Ms. Rhoden stated that those conversions were included, to which Mayor Oravec responded that the number would not always be linear since it depended on the life of the system. Ms. Rhoden stated that residents were selling or refinancing and most of the mortgage companies were requiring that homes be connected to City facilities. Mayor Oravec asked if they could actively work with lenders to make sure it was a requirement, to which Ms. Rhoden responded that it was a requirement for anything federally funded.

Councilwoman Caraballo asked what would happen if they went over the \$14 million mark and it was out of their control, to which Brad Macek, Utility Systems Director, responded the funds would be coming from the Operating Fund and it could impact the increase of rates. He explained that they were putting \$2.3 million per year into the 10-year payback and that was why the additional \$700,000 would bring them to almost \$3 million. Mr. Macek explained that they wanted to maintain the 1.5% increase, as anything else would impact their Operating Funds.

Mayor Oravec suggested informing the residents that the City planned to mandate a conversion and asked them to sign up for the grant program as soon as possible. He added that he was looking to keep the \$100,000 in the General Fund budget to leverage the funds to continue to incentivize and also suggested sending letters with a sense of urgency. Councilwoman Caraballo requested a full communication plan on how they were going to communicate with the residents affected.

The Council asked for a connection/conversion program to be brought back to them with different options for targeted connections in the future.

- 5.c** A presentation from the Florida Small Business Development Center at Indian River State College on the State of Small Business for the City Council Winter Retreat.

[2021-157](#)

Tom Kindred, Regional Director, Small Business Development Center, IRSC, gave the State of Small Business presentation.

Mr. Kindred stated that the Small Business Development Center network partnered with the Florida Chamber Foundation at the University of West Florida to administer a survey of small businesses. (Clerk's Note: A copy of the survey was provided to the Council.) He stated that small business, leisure, and hospitality were hit the hardest during COVID. Mr. Kindred stated that more than 65% of businesses across the Treasure Coast added expenses due to the public safety risks and 50% of business faced closure.

In terms of funding, Mr. Kindred explained that 43% of the region's business applied for the PPP and 20% received the funding. He stated that 65% of the businesses applied for the EIDL Advance Grant and 40% were approved. Mr. Kindred stated that 70% of business were worried about costs and economic uncertainty. He stated that they helped clients obtain \$86 million in government contracting and they worked with over 700 specific business owners. He added that 200 of the 700 were considered long-term clients.

Mr. Kindred stated that they were part of the state's first responders and they were the primary principle contact for the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan. He explained that they were the sole organization that received, processed, and distributed funds after a disaster and added that they processed 95 loan applications, funded 74, and put over \$3 million in no interest emergency bridge loans. Mr. Kindred explained different ways they utilized the CARES ACT and the different positions that were filled.

In conclusion, Mr. Kindred presented 2021 initiatives and stated that they executed a three-year partnership agreement with the City of Port St. Lucie to fund half of the cost for a full-time consultant which would focus on the small business community.

Mayor Oravec asked what the partnership has accomplished, to date and where it was going into the future, to which Mr. Kindred responded that the first step was being part of the Strategic Plan and thanked the Council for allowing it. He stated that they have continued to partner with the City on the Business Accelerator Program and will soon bring the Profit Mastery Program to the City.

Mayor Oravec asked if there were informational signs at the Building Department to point small business owners in the right direction, to

which Joel Dramis, Building Official, responded in the negative. Mayor Oravec stated that he would like a road map to help businesses from start to finish.

5.d Solid Waste Program Update

[2021-158](#)

Carmen Capezzuto, Director, Neighborhood Services, and Michael Hahn, Solid Waste Manager, presented the Solid Waste Update and Growth Plan.

Councilwoman Caraballo stated that she was asked by many residents to have a trash receptacle placed on the Crosstown Bridge and explained that she previously asked the City Manager but was told that WastePro could not stop on the bridge to empty the trash cans. Councilwoman Caraballo stated that she would like to find a way to figure it out before it gets worse.

Mayor Oravec asked if they could add a trash receptacle by the sitting area, to which Mr. Hahn responded that they could make it happen. Mayor Oravec added that they also needed to make sure the shoulder was clean of debris. Vice Mayor Martin asked Michael Hahn to contact St. Lucie County and ask them to place recycle bins at the South County Stadium.

Russell Mackie, Regional Vice President, Waste Pro, responded to Vice Mayor Martin's request and stated that he would have a recycle bin at the South County Stadium by Monday morning and that they would find a way to collect the trash on the Crosstown Bridge.

Mr. Mackie gave a brief presentation and explained Waste Pro's efforts to keep up with the City's current and future growth.

5.e Approve the Stormwater Management Plan

[2021-142](#)

(Clerk's Note: This item was moved to Day 1 of the Retreat, at the request of Mayor Oravec.)

5.f Hear a presentation regarding Special Events as requested by the City Council.

[2021-156](#)

(Clerk's Note: This item was moved to Day 2 of the Retreat, at the request of Mayor Oravec.)

6. Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Karen A. Phillips, City Clerk

Calleigh N. Myers, Deputy City Clerk