

# City of Port St. Lucie

## Special City Council

### Meeting Minutes - Draft

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

Shannon M. Martin, Mayor

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

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**Tuesday, January 18, 2022**

**9:30 AM**

**Council Chambers, City Hall**

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**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 Martin on January 18, 2022, at 9:32 AM, at Port St. Lucie City Hall, 121 SW Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, Florida.

**2. Roll Call**

Council Members Present:

Mayor Shannon M. Martin  
Vice Mayor Jolien Caraballo  
Councilman Dave Pickett  
Councilman Anthony Bonna

Council Members Not Present:

Councilwoman Stephanie Morgan

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Martin led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**4. Public to be Heard**

Mayor Martin opened Public to be Heard. There being no comments, she closed Public to be Heard.

**5. Special Presentations**

- 5.a** Discuss SW Chapman Avenue Road Closure Beautification  
and Pedestrian Access Features and Authorize Staff to  
Proceed with Construction.

[2021-1081](#)

Clyde Cuffy, Public Works Department, provided a brief PowerPoint presentation on the Chapman Avenue access feature. He said when Port St. Lucie Boulevard was reconstructed in 2013, residents were concerned about traffic cutting through. He stated staff did a traffic study for that area, which recommended traffic calming on Trenton Lane and Chapman Avenue. He said the residents petitioned to have Chapman Avenue closed completely, as traffic was still cutting through their community. Mr. Cuffy indicated that Public Works in 2015 constructed a gate at the end of Chapman Avenue at Trenton Lane, essentially making it a dead end road. He said there was a 311 case in 2019 when the City started exploring options to change the gate and fence, but still maintain a closed road. Mr. Cuffy explained the current proposal replaces the existing chain-link fence and gate with removable and permanent bollards to create a nicer look that has a decorative street feature. He stated the removable bollards will allow emergency services through that intersection. He said when the bollards are in place, it will only be open for pedestrian and bicycle access. Mr. Cuffy stated staff is requesting Council's approval to move forward and get to construction, as the plans are done.

Mayor Martin explained this was originally done many years ago, as a result of RaceTrac coming in and the residents being really concerned. She said the chain-link fence has been a thorn in her side for a long time, and she is glad staff is proposing some changes. She inquired if the residents have been informed about the change, to which Mr. Cuffy responded in the negative. He stated that besides the 311 case, staff has not reached out to the residents. Mayor Martin stated she wants to make sure the residents are aware the chain-link fence is coming down, since it was a big concern years ago. She said they will be happy to see what is being proposed, because it looks much better and is beautifying the City. Mr. Cuffy stated that staff will inform the residents.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she agreed that it has been a thorn. She said the last time she was by there, the grass was worn down from people going back and forth where they access and walk. She suggested some good landscaping, with a tree on both sides to frame the bollards and to make a nice entrance to the neighborhood.

Councilman Pickett stated he agreed landscaping would beautify the project and inquired about the time-frame. Mr. Cuffy stated it would have to be submitted to Procurement for a contractor and construction,

so it would be a month or two after the bids come back, but sometime this year.

Mayor Martin stated that in that time-frame, staff could get the information out to the residents. Mr. Cuffy indicated it was not through Procurement yet, so staff can notify the residents during that time. Mayor Martin stated she would like a public meeting or notifications, so the residents know what is going on while they are in that process and it does not delay anything going forward.

Council consensus was to move forward with the SW Chapman Avenue Pedestrian Access improvements and requested that the residents/neighbors be informed.

**5.b** Hear the National Golf Foundation Comprehensive Report  
and Presentation Regarding The Saints Golf Course

[2021-1073](#)

Richard Singer and Ed Getherall, with the National Golf Foundation, provided a PowerPoint presentation that summarized their report, findings, and recommendations regarding The Saints Golf Course. They discussed the purpose of the operations review, economic contribution analysis, and guest survey. They also reviewed the external factors affecting golf operations, economic impact and financial projections for the Saints Golf Course, as well as recommended upgrades and conclusions.

Mr. Singer and Mr. Getherall responded to Council's questions and comments. Vice Mayor Caraballo questioned and/or commented on the following: success of concessions/restaurant/banquet facility as a revenue source; agrees with branding to become more competitive and help with revenue; enterprise is her standard vs. private sector; are golf courses being reimagined because of loss/investment of taxpayer dollars. She asked that the City Manager and staff provide the Council with some "wins" to make sure the golf course is still wanted and supported by the taxpayers and not a burden, even if it needs to be a different business model.

Councilman Bonna stated he was concerned with the enterprise fund vs. general fund, as he did not want the golf course to be a large expense to the taxpayers. Mr. Singer responded and explained that the General Fund was not a recommendation but an option to think about, after looking at the expense/labor cutting that has been done in the past.

Councilman Pickett inquired if the course was being overplayed and if there was downtime for maintenance of the facility, to which Mr. Singer did not feel the course had too much play but it needed to be maintained. Mr. Getherall noted the course's capacity was much higher than what they were discussing. Councilman Pickett questioned the cart path improvements in two separate years, to which Mr. Singer stated some repairs were more urgent than others and that the sequencing could be rearranged. Sherman Conrad, Director of Parks & Recreation, explained the timing of the cart path repairs and drainage.

Mayor Martin stated the report did not provide any more information than what they already knew. She said she did not want to hear about the driving range until the other issues have been addressed. She asked for specifics regarding the rebranding, food and beverage partnership, building revenue, irrigation, cart path issues, and over what period of time. She stated this Council always talks about doing things right the first time. She said they need to see a plan on memberships, more data on surveys, how are they tracking rounds of golf, and data on updating the POS systems. She stated the golf course has been an enterprise fund and she does not want it weighing heavily on the taxpayers. She asked what staff is doing to address these issues.

Mayor Martin stated she was looking forward to the Budget Advisory Committee's (BAC) comprehensive review, questions, and recommendations. She asked that the Committee be given the information on the drainage timelines as to when those capital improvements are supposed to be done and look at the cost of making repairs in the short-term vs. long-term.

Mayor Martin stated she was not looking to change it from an enterprise fund, as she agrees with the comments that have been made, but it would not hurt for the BAC to look at it and provide any recommendations or suggestions. She said that staff and the BAC have a lot of work to do before moving forward with any future upgrades or improvements.

Mayor Martin stated that maintenance has always been an issue and inquired about the staffing issues. Mr. Conrad explained they currently have six contract positions, are short staffed, and always have vacancies/turnover, but are proposing going to ten positions. Mayor

Martin stated she wanted the BAC to review this as well and bring forth their recommendations.

Mayor Martin stated that based on their conversations last summer and what she is hearing now, staff is not doing all they can, looking at the big picture, or resolving these issues, which is what they need to do before going forward. She said they will need to have another discussion and update. The City Manager indicated the next appropriate time for a discussion would be at the CIP in April. Mayor Martin noted that the CIP may need to be adjusted and should be reviewed by the BAC as well.

Council requested that the Budget Advisory Committee comprehensively review the National Golf Foundation's report and recommendations, and provide their comments and suggestions to Council.

Mayor Martin recessed the meeting at 10:36 AM and reconvened the meeting at 10:47 AM.

## 6. New Business

- 6.a** The City Council is Requested to Hear the Findings of the Parks and Recreation Department Waterpark Feasibility Study, Discuss, and Provide Further Direction to Staff.

[2021-864](#)

(Clerk's Note: This item was requested to be typed verbatim.)

Mayor Martin: We are back from the short break and we are now moving on to New Business, 6a; hear the Findings of the Parks and Recreation Department Waterpark Feasibility Study, discuss, and provide further direction to staff.

Mr. Roth: Good Morning Mayor, Vice Mayor, Council members, Mr. Blackburn, Mr. Stokes. My name is Tim Roth. For those of you who don't know me, I am the Personnel Liaison Manager for the Parks and Recreation Department. On December 14, 2020, it was discussed amongst Council members, their thoughts, on providing a water park and agreed that a consultant should be contracted to deliver a waterpark feasibility study to estimate the cost of construction & maintenance should a waterpark be developed. The Parks & Recreation Department through a competitive bidding process contracted Kimley Horn and associates with Counsilman-Hunsaker. At this time, I would like to introduce you to Mark Hatchel of Kimley Horn

and George Deines of Counsilman-Hunsaker. Mr. Hatchel and Mr. Deines will be presenting the results of their study.

Mayor Martin: Thank you. Good Morning.

Mr. Hatchel: Very nice to be here and we appreciate getting to spend a couple of days in beautiful Port St. Lucie.

Mayor Martin: We are happy to have you.

Mr. Hatchel: I am Mark Hatchel and this is George Deines. Why Kimley Horn and why Counsilman-Hunsaker? Well, Counsilman-Hunsaker is one of the leading aquatic planning and design firms in the United States founded by a swimming coach, Doc Counsilman and one of his swimmers, Joe Hunsaker. I am a park-planner and landscape architect with Kimley Horn, which is a large engineering firm, has been for years here in Florida. I'm the waterpark guy; I've spent over 30 years designing water parks all around the country. As I mentioned I am a part-time planner and landscape architect, so I've done many park master plans, designs, and my first pool was in 1980; that was an old school L shaped pool. I started doing work for Wet-n-Wild, I don't know if any of you ever got to go to the old Wet-n-Wild park in Orlando, but they built a park in Arlington, Texas. I am headquartered out of Dallas and travel around. I did the black hole slide, the children's play lagoon, the bubba tub, the blue Niagara, the beach club, a lot of cool stuff. That led to me to doing work for them internationally and then I joined Kimley-Horn 20 years ago and we started doing planning projects with George and Counsilman-Hunsaker, also designing municipal water parks all around the land. That's why we are here. George, do you want to tell them a little about yourself?

Mr. Deines: I am George Deines with Counsilman-Hunsaker. I actually have a parks operations background. I started out as a municipal water park operator before joining Counsilman-Hunsaker about eight years ago.

Mr. Hatchel: So, we've done many of these studies and presentations. Our scope of work had four tasks, Site Evaluations and Due Diligence. We were going to look at several sites, we ended up looking at 14. I think we did our due diligence and spent a lot of time with staff on those. Then we wanted to talk about Design Program, Concepts & Phasing, Market Analysis & Opinion of Expense/Revenue, which

George does, being an operator. We started in June, we had a kickoff meeting, we did site visits, we had an internet meeting to review sites and demographics. When we started this, we were thinking your population was a bit less but now we know you're over 200,000 and growing every day, I think, which is pretty awesome. Then we met with staff and then we were waiting to get to Council today. We are going to go through the demographic analysis, age and income, market analysis with the site evaluation analysis, some recent example facilities and cost and then operational analysis.

Mr. Deines: One of the things that we noted as just our existing population and then the projection to grow over 200,000 by 2025, which you have exceeded. That also is a good thing for having aquatic offerings for your community. We also look at different drive times. We know that there are different types of facilities that require different drive times from more local, community neighborhood facilities, maybe have a 15-20 minute drive time, a more regional size may have a 30-minute, and then your large waterpark may have upwards of 60-90 minutes. Some of the things that help us to see that are where are those other aquatic facilities and water parks located. We, obviously, have the hour and 45-minute drive to Orlando with the Disney parks and Volcano Bay and Island H2O. Here more locally, Sailfish Splash is probably the closest aquatic facility that has waterpark amenities with the large lazy river, the children's play area and then they also have the competitive side of their facility. Then the Rapids water park in West Palm is the largest regional competitor. When we look at those different providers, they actually fall right in line with what Mark & I have seen in other parts of the country. You have your smaller community feel types of facilities that have as low as \$3 price point to \$10: we're seeing about \$5-\$10 price points for those types of facilities. You have Sailfish Splash that is in that next tier so we're closer to the \$15-\$20 range. Then you have the Rapids Water Park, which is a privately run, privately operated, with a \$50 price point. This really falls in line with what Mark & I see at other places, in terms of the different sizes of water parks and family aquatic centers and the correlating admission price points that each of those have. Overall, positive factors, population density as we talked about is extremely rich, especially with the number of children under the age of 14. (inaudible) The lack of aquatic facilities here in Port St. Lucie, we have the County operated Ravenswood pool, but it is a lap pool with a small spray pad, so it doesn't really have the capacity for the population type that you have as well as the modern aquatic amenities. We also see that ability to enhance upon what is offered by Sailfish Splash.

They do have a large recreational park, but half of their facility is also on the competitive side. So, if you focus on the recreational side you can really increase the recreational amenities compared to them. I would say, negative factors, I would say the proximity to the Rapids given that hour drive time. They are going to have a good market share so there could be some overlap in those hour drive time radius circles that we showed where you can steal some of their population or attendance, but it is also going to overlap where they are obviously getting some of that already. Lastly, the effect of the Orlando parks compared to your proposed park, it could be that you cannot charge as high of a rate as Orlando because people expect to pay more in Orlando. With that said, where could a family aquatic center, regional aquatic center go, and I am going to hand it off to Mark to talk about that.

Mr. Hatchel: I'll say this too, I am an old waterpark guy. I've done them for years but sometimes you go into a community and it is the W word. The waterpark is not a good word, but waterpark has come to mean a lot of things from splash pad to a family aquatic center which might be something bigger than the small local one but not a full blown waterpark like the Rapids. We started out looking at three potential sites. The criteria was that we needed 12 acres minimum for parking, expansion, and growth, it should be accessible and visible near a major arterial or collector, you don't want to drive a lot of traffic through a neighborhood to a facility. It has to be developable, potable water, needs to have good drainage, and also have sewer and primary electric. All of those are important things and then if you are going to build a water park you hope you can make it affordable for the residents & visitors but also make it desirable for the visitors. When I stayed over at Tradition on my first trip, there were lots of kids in those hotel rooms and they were full, but they did not have a lot to do. I think you can piggyback on that. We looked at a number of sites. We called it the north, the south and central as you can see on the map. There were quite a few sites that we found in the north, the central; we had almost the same amount in the south. George looked at the demographics, did you want to say anything about the demographics?

Mr. Deines: I think the main thing here is that we were just looking for anything that really stands out in terms of population density, population density of children under the age of 19, and household income. What we found is that the central was the highest in terms of the population density category, income stayed pretty steady, but it wasn't



unnecessarily a massive swing from one to the other. There is about an 80,000 person difference in the population. Even having 368,000 people within the general area of those sites is still really strong.

Mr. Hatchel: So, looking at all the sites and we could go into details, Tim could give it to you if you'd like. We really came up with a Top 3 sites and the number one was in the Tradition area, but it was under contract for another development. There is a site further south of that which is available but there is not much going on around it yet. Then also the Torino Regional Park site emerged as a top potential site for a couple of reasons, there is space, it has good access, it is not surrounding or in close proximity to homes backing up to it and also it has drainage, and it is a regional park so it could share facilities. If you look at that in a little more detail, this was our check the boxes sheet and it shows how those three sites emerged. Looking a little bit closer at the Torino Regional Park site, you can see that we have good circulation, there is drainage, and there is quite a bit of property that the City owns. Once we narrowed in on the site, we wanted to look at some example facilities and costs. One good thing about our team, is we have done a number of facilities recently and we have ongoing facilities, both in Florida and nearby. To do a water park of about any sort nowadays you need about \$10-25 million. If you are going to do a Disney water park, you're talking hundreds of millions of dollars. I don't think we're going to do that & I don't think Disney is going to come down and build one. What could you consider doing here if you want to in the future? One type of project that we have been doing in a lot of for communities is a combination of facilities with both competitive facilities and recreational facilities. We would call that a regional aquatic center for a municipal water park. They are pretty compact, you need about 100 car parking, but you would have a bathhouse/office/concession, an 8-lap pool with a one meter board for competition, open/enclosed water slide, a children's play and spray pool and a lazy river with crossing activity. Those projects are costing about \$10-15 million today. The good thing is that like I said, you could have a resident rate and a non-resident rate. If you want to you can sell season passes and leverage the cost down to minimal cost for a family and then still have a facility that is fun enough to go to that you will draw from outside your community as well. This is an example of one that we completed about two years ago in Dallas. You see that it has a nice competition pool, a one meter board, it has a bathhouse and support facilities, children's play pool and a lazy river.

Mayor Martin: I have a question, when you built this facility, the one in Texas. Was it built in such a way where it was structurally done so that changes could be made in the future? Because as you know, water parks get stale over time unless there are changes made to them. So when I took a tour with our parks staff to the Chicagoland area, that was one of the things that was brought up consistently in the parks that they had constructed. They had what they had and what they could afford at the time, but they had the structure in place to make changes whether it be adding a slide or changing a structure completely later on.

Mr. Hatchel: Yes, that is very true. It is important if you're going to grow the facility and have more of a commercial type of operation. For a municipal operation there is going to be ongoing maintenance, you're going to want to have updates but many times you're building a facility for the next 15 or 20 or 30 years. It is not quite as important; if you're going in to replace an old pool you're usually limited on space. But you are correct, if we're going to build a facility that is going to modify and grow then we need extra room for sure. We completed a project in Northport over near Sarasota, a couple of years ago. That was after a pretty extensive planning process over several years. George & I worked on that together, the final concept was what I would call a hybrid. It is not quite Martin County, but it is getting close. There is no diving well, but it has a stretch 25 pool, it has a bulkhead; every one of these can be unique. There is not a formula, it depends on what the community wants to do. It turned out well. George, do you want to talk about the operations of Northport a little bit?

Mr. Deines: One of the things that we walked them through was, what does an operational season look like? Do you keep the lap pool open year-round? Do you have the recreation side open seasonally? They ended up doing a hybrid where the lap pool is open essentially, year-round, I think they close one day during the week and then the recreation side is open the traditional Memorial Day through Labor Day season, but they open weekends in the shoulder season, late April to May end of September & October before they shut the recreation side down for the winter season.

Mr. Hatchel: There was no room to expand this one because it was a shoehorn. We expanded it from a smaller concept to this large one. It is in a regional park, with ball fields, there is rec center right across the street, and they share parking. A lot of times when you open these facilities and operate them, the longer they are open the less overall

revenue you make & the harder they are to staff, so you have to really right size the operations for your community. The Commission was pretty adamant that they want to keep it open as much as possible but that is a challenge because there is very few people there maybe as many staff as patrons when you get into the shoulder seasons. It was about \$12 million when we did it but now it would be \$15-20 million depending on how big you made it.

Mayor Martin: It's been open a couple years now?

Mr. Hatchel: Yes. George has some good operational data, and we can also get it from the operators. They had a really good season last season; it is very popular. These kind of facilities become a source of pride for the community. They talked about a pool for years and just could not get the dollars. They've grown too and have gotten younger, like Port St. Lucie. It has a little bit of water park, a little bit of competition gears towards polo. They have \$150,000 scoreboard at the facility, that they wanted, and shade; it is a good facility for them. You can get to the Rapids, what we would call a large regional municipal water park. This facility that we are showing you here was in Baytown, Texas, kind of a blue collar community. They did a study to replace their old pools and rather than having two or three standard pools, they decided to do a water park. When the Mayor saw that we had a surfing machine idea to put into it, they got behind it and did a bond election which passed. We planned an expansion with some alternate bids, but they got some hotel/motel tax money which gave them extra funding, so they built all of our planned expansions the very first year. After two years, we did a master plan expansion, we added a wave pool, more restrooms, more snack bars and then we added some throw rides. It is really a full blown municipal water park now, it's about five acres of park and five acres of parking so about 10 acres. There is a little room to expand still, and it has got virtually, a big water park would have just not quite as big and quite as spread out as Rapids. That project has been very successful, are you updated on the operations? Have they been breaking even or generating revenue?

Mr. Deines: Yup, this facility still has a positive operating cash flow on a year to year basis. They have been able to leverage some new technologies, in terms of online pricing, moving towards getting people to buy tickets online instead of at the gate so that they can save on staffing at the front gate. They are one of the models for a successful municipal water park operation today.

Mr. Hatchel: It is a challenge, I mean you have to hire staff, you have to have a really entrepreneurial manager. There are two really good municipal water parks, large ones in the state of Texas that we both have done work on; one is at North Richland Hills near the Dallas-Fort Worth area and it was an enterprise fund, still is. I don't think that Baytown is an enterprise fund, is it George?

Mr. Deines: I'm not sure.

Mr. Hatchel: There is an aerial view of it, but you can see that they have body fins, a loop slide, rafter rides, the whole nine yards. What it doesn't have is a competitive facility which was not their goal. The Florida model is both like Martin County. The problem is that it is very expensive to do both and there is a lot of facilities that do both. There is only so many college teams to come down and rent that pool and generate nights. I guess what I would encourage you to do is if you move in this direction in the future you can kind of pull your horns in and go back to a standard new style aquatic facility with fun stuff, swim in lanes or if you go the water park route try to differentiate it, make it different than Sailfish Splash. George & I did some study work with them recently and their challenge has been to get money to add new attractions plus they don't have any space. We did come up with some ideas, but the rides are big, they are expensive and so maybe, when you think about what you want to do you can either tailor it to the residents and kind of go more park... (inaudible). Or if you want to do something bigger and there is public support and funding to do that then I would try to be different than both the Rapids...because for a family it is kind of intimidating to go to the Rapids but if you go to Martin County, I think trying to do both, each one has some challenges. There is not enough water park, and they need a separate dive well and on and on. Anyway, we have no decisions to ask you for today unless staff does. We just wanted to tell you what we found. We wanted to show you, if you put a big one in how much land it would take at Torino Park...you know we can't really design anything yet for you because we don't know what you want to do, so you need to tell us. George, do you want to dive in the weeds a little bit on operations?

Mr. Deines: So, one of the other things that we looked at has not only the size and scale of the different aquatic center types and the capital cost ranges but then also what does that look like on an operational basis because you know that that is a huge decision making point for

any community. We looked at those different types of facilities, the different operating seasons. We even looked at cost assumptions using the City's part-time and full-time wage rates, number of team members. We developed a rough order of magnitude expense budgets for each of the different facility types so you can see there; personnel obviously grows as the facility gets bigger from two full-time staff members for options one and two to upwards of five for option three. The direct expense includes items such as repair and maintenance, operational supplies, chemicals, advertising, utilities is obviously a significant line item, pumps and motors and pool heating during the shoulder seasons when it might get a little chilly. We put together a programming budget that includes not only swim lessons, water fitness during the seasonal operations but then also food and beverage. We have also included .5% long-term deferred maintenance funds to each of these numbers, were we look at you know, what does it take to replace the pool plaster after year 13, what does it take to refinish the slides after year 8. Some of those larger items won't necessarily be accounted for in your annual repair and maintenance budget so we recommended putting aside about .5% of the original construction costs. The \$792k, the \$1 million and the \$2.269 million all have that deferred maintenance fund included within those costs. After that we look at projections based on the size of the facility, the capacity of the facility, the operational season for attendance. We have a sliding scale of entry, admission costs, both for daily entrance and season passes as Mark talked about. We look at program and rental revenue and obviously food and beverage. The one thing that we find is that the more amenities you have people will stay longer. If people know that they will stay longer they will drive a little bit further, they are going to stay longer, then they will pay a little bit higher price point. We looked at you know, like a \$7-9 admission range for the first option, \$8-11 for the second options and the third option is the larger regional water park where it was closer to that \$20 option. We went a little bit above Martin County in that option but also sustainably lower than the Rapids. With that, we had total revenue in between \$500,000-700,000 on the two regional aquatic centers and then the larger water park pushing two and a half million dollars.

Mr. Hatchel: Before you get into the net costs. Baytown, when they did an expansion then they would raise the admission and the public was okay with that. They also had a lower cost of intercity smaller family aquatic center; a very small one that was pay one price, \$5, get in anytime you want, young or old. Then they had as they added to the other water park, they got their rates up now to \$20+...

Mr. Deines: It's closer to \$27-28.

Mr. Hatchel: But it still is half of what the big water park would be, and people are willing to pay it.

Mr. Deines: Lastly, we look at the expenses compared to the revenue to give an overall recapture rate. Again, these expense line items have that deferred maintenance fund of roughly \$50,000, \$70,000, and well over \$100,000 for options 1, 2 and 3. We were looking at in the range of 60-70% cost recovery for the two smaller options, whereas the larger option we could see increasing to over 100% to be a self-sustaining operational basis. One of the reasons that the cost recovery is a little bit lower on the smaller size facility, I think a lot of it is... number one we have just seen wage rates substantially increase here recently, specifically for lifeguards. Historically, when I was managing my water park and this is about eight years ago, we were paying \$8.75/hour and now we're seeing lifeguard wage rates at \$12-16/hour range, but we've also seen the admission costs stay stagnant. So, if admission costs stay stagnant while personnel costs continue to rise then the cost recovery will be a little bit larger. The other thing to consider is that with not having any existing infrastructure for aquatic facilities, it is going to cost a little bit more for that initial aquatic facility because you don't have an aquatic facility director. A lot of times we will see municipalities that operate a seasonal aquatic facility that they will have a dual position, special events plus aquatic or athletics something along those lines. We also see part time maintenance staff as well, instead of having a designated pool technician you'll have two park maintenance team members that are CPO certified and they just alternate going to the pool on either day it's not a designated full-time team member. I think that is a couple of reasons why the cost recovery rate is a little bit lower because there is not some of that existing infrastructure here within the City.

Mr. Hatchel: Historically, pools are subsidized in most communities as part of their Parks & Rec program. You just haven't had a pool to do that with. It is a challenge staffing right now, but it is a highly desired amenity. It comes to the top in nearly every Parks Master Plan.

Mayor Martin: You mentioned with the lifeguards and from my experience of traveling to some of these facilities, you need a lot of them. There are specific rules and laws with regard to how long they

can be out there watching, have to rotate so that their eyes aren't fixated on the same area; that drives up a lot of the cost too. One of the facilities even had...because they needed too many lifeguards, they actually instituted a training program to bring up the younger kids to start to get them in line and on the path so that they continuously had that staffing opportunities because of the way those positions go. I thought that was really interesting, how many they actually needed, not wanted but needed in order to appropriately staff those facilities for safety.

Mr. Hatchel: They are usually hiring, what about three times what you need on the deck in any one season? (Clerk's Note: Mayor Martin & Mr. Deines responded in the affirmative.) Let's say 15 staff positions, you would hire 45 and then being students, college students, high school students, a lot of them don't want to work all summer. That is the joys of full operation.

Mr. Deines: Lastly, the conversation has been had regarding is it best to have a City owned and operated facility, is it best to contract with a third party operator, is there a public-private partnership that could be developed for this. The answer to those questions are yes, the City could own and operate it. We have seen that done successfully across the country and yes, we have seen success public-private partnerships or third party operations. Some of the things to consider is just, how much control the City wants over the facility versus do you want to rely on an outside contractor and have to oversee their contract with the City especially if it is built on public land and it is a private operator. Also, we have seen non-profit entities, cities partner with YMCA's, YMCA's have existing aquatics divisions so sometimes they can operate it more efficiently than the city could. We have seen the public-private partnership where it is a completely separate entity that is going to manage the facility with no oversight from the city or we have seen that third party operator which the city hires to operate. So, there is just a lot of different types of ways that you could set up the facility. As I had mentioned Mark & I have seen all be successful and we've seen all not be so successful a lot of it just depends on the people you have in place and your goals and visions for the facility. With that, that is a snapshot of our last six months of works just to look at those different sizes and scales of park types, proposed and projected operational budgets as well as the site. Mark & I would welcome any questions or comments you have about anything that we discussed today.

Mayor Martin: Thank you. Council, questions?

Vice Mayor Caraballo: How often do you have to update items, would you say to maintain their relevance to continue to get people to come?

Mr. Deines: I would say that the larger scale water parks, typically, are on a 3-5 year basis that they would do that. As Mark mentioned, the smaller municipal facilities, typically, we don't see them doing large expansions because they are looking at a specific program with the lap, leisure, children's pools, the water slides. Maybe it is possible to add a third water slide within 3-4 years. But I would probably say that 3-5 year mark is fairly common within the industry to make updates to the facility. The other thing that we could do is in design we can plan for some of those updates in the future. You know, design a water slide that is only going to have two slides in the beginning, but it could accommodate a third water slide that you can add after a couple of seasons.

Mr. Hatchel: The municipal type of facility, the family aquatic centers they don't do the kind of ride expansions, typically, because a lot of times they are funded with bond money and it is kind of a one time thing. It is important to set aside that maintenance money so you can update the shade, or you can fix a slide that is broken, those types of things, replace pumps. We try to be conservative, one thing I like about Counsilman-Hunsaker and they have been operators for a long time as well as designers typically the revenue is better than what we project but we don't want to paint too rosy of a picture; a lot of it has to do with the operations as to how well they do. If you have a good operator, you're going to do better.

Vice Mayor Caraballo: I think that goes to the conservation that we have to have with the Public, which is if this is the direction, we go it is not just a one-time investment if you truly want a premiere water park. It is going to take continual investments every 3-5 years to ensure that we can stay competitive in the market because you're going into the private sector. So, private-public partnerships, everyone talks about this buzz word that I hear about private-public partnerships. In my experience on the Council I haven't really seen that private partnership come to fruition at the level that we've worked towards, we've anticipated. Tell me what the realistic marker is for that? Is there a market for this? Are there investors out there that would actually if we provided a site, a



location, would want to invest and build the infrastructure?

Mr. Hatchel: Well, there had traditionally been operators that wanted to leverage your dollars and your land to get a park that they could operate and make money and then share the profits back with you. It is harder to find a water park developer that says ok, I have a park, you know, I have the Rapids, I am not going to come build a park to compete with myself in Port St. Lucie. I, personally, being a commercial water park guy in past years, I don't see that happening here. Do you, George? Just to be honest. I think we could put out an RFQ and see, those that have gone out for the last 20-30 years Dade County in Florida years ago. But the type where you build it and then they operate it, and you don't have the headaches of that and share some revenues back with you. You've actually had experience with, right?

Mr. Deines: I think as Mark mentioned just with the close proximity of several large commercial water parks within that two hour radius. I think that would be a deterrent to somebody coming in. The other thing to consider is that if they are going to come in and the price points for those types of water parks is going to be in that \$35-50 range not in the more traditional municipal range of \$15-25 for park admission. It is going to come at a larger cost to the residents but sometimes we had seen resident rates discounts have been negotiated in because there is tax payer dollars in the form of either land, capital, or operations that go into that. As Mark mentioned you can always release a request of proposals and see what comes in. But our thought, just given the proximity of those other parks that it is probably more not going to happen than it would be to happen.

Vice Mayor Caraballo: I appreciate your honesty. I think that needs to be said. I don't want to paint a rosy picture that we're going to find somebody out of the blue that is going to come and build this beautiful volcano bay style water park. It is very difficult to find those kind of investors for those demographics and marketability reasons. The competitive side versus the water park side, for me, this is more of a comment than a question. I want to see us do either or more than...I think, to me, it is getting focused and being on focused on what it is we are trying to put out there is really important. When I lived for a short time in my life in Miami, I used to compete, I went to the competitive regional location that we have there. I mean obviously they have world class Olympic diving, you name it. So, the question becomes is there a market for that? While we want an aquatic center with cool slides, is there a market right now where you build a world class Olympic type

facility that provides tournaments which would provide tourism revenue, etc. What is that market look like currently, in the state of affairs?

Mr. Deines: I think on the operational side, that the competitive facilities are always historically subsidized more than the recreational features, but you do have that ability to attract meets. With that being said it really bumps the initial capital investment to do that. Because if you are going to attract meets then now you need two separate bodies of water with the Olympic sized pool then warm up and cool down space. Then you need to included diving, and you need to set aside room for spectator seating, all of the large USA Swimming meets have a minimum of 1,000 spectators seat requirements. That really ups that capital investment.

Vice Mayor Caraballo: But the subsidizing piece is higher, grant funding, college support, etc., would be higher, in the sense of funding wise. I like the bonding piece too that they mentioned, with the last facility where they put it out to voter referendum to see what the appetite was for the voters. At a minimum I would like to see us hold the land in Torino, just stick a pin in it and then continue the conversation that way we don't dedicate it to something else and we continue to have the discussion, thank you.

Mayor Martin: For me, this is something that I have been working with staff on for a while. Torino, is our next regional park and we do have funding committed to it. We have \$10 million in water & sewer funding committed to that park. One concern I have is about the traffic on Torino as a result of putting in a water facility. Based on all of our citizens surveys we know that the citizens want water facilities this has been going on a long time. Our survey is out right now, and I suspect the results will be very similar. I think that we should be looking at putting in some type of aquatic facility going forward in any plan. I know that we are also going to be looking at when we get City Center shortly, looking at what that master plan is going to look like. I am not sure if an aquatic facility can fit in there but that is where we have our rec center, we have our convention space, we had conversations about attracting hotels; that may be a fit too. I'm not sure but I think that is something that has to show itself through the master planning process that we are going to be embarking upon very soon. But whatever we do regionally as far as a park, we definitely need to make sure what we are addressing the wants and needs with regards to some type of water facility, aquatic facility. I agree, I don't know if we need to put in an

Olympic sized pool with the aquatic center and I also know that there may be some economic development opportunity in the future that may address that. That is still to be determined in the future. Of course Fort Pierce is moving forward with their surf park and their residential component as well. Where are we with our regional park design for Torino?

City Manager: Sherman may correct me and provide more information. It is slated to go out for proposals this year for the designer and developing that master plan. That is our next step, the master plan.

Mr. Conrad: That is correct. We will be having public meetings, but we've also been approached by the Y on two different occasions. They would like to be a part of that and something to do with aquatics and the County has also expressed interest in something to do with an aquatics facility, not sure where that is going to go. I agree with you, because of the lack of land that we have for the future between the 150 acres and also the piece of property that we have across the street, which is 44 acres, somewhere for the future of Port St. Lucie. We do need to earmark land so that in 5, 10, 15 years so if it is a bigger water park, we have a place to expand to.

Mayor Martin: Great comments on the County and the Y. The problem, if I'm just being frank with the Y has been, they want to partner but there is no funds committed and no plan that I am aware of in the next 1-2 years as we get Torino out of the ground in order to help facilitate that. We know with regard to the County they made mention of committing \$4 million but that also hasn't come to fruition. I think it would be better if we plan on our own resources, our own funds and then if they want to come on board, those two entities, with what we're doing then we can rely on that and say, hey yeah it is going to cost us however much money less that we have to commit to it because they are going to help us out, which would be great, but we have to plan on doing it on our own. I am sure, we would probably be best served to see what these aquatic facilities components look like in, definitely the Torino location and of course as we move forward seeing what comes out of the City Center plan before we actually commit to a site. I am also concerned about again, you know with a regional park we are going to have a lot of flow into the traffic flow, it is not just going to be the residents in that area and we already have issues out in Torino with the roadway and traffic. We have to make sure that whatever we do is going to also address that because I can see this Chamber being full

and there being a lot of issues. If we are going to prepare for something like that regional park, especially adding the aquatics component to it, that road has to be prepared for it as well; it has to be designed accordingly with proper parking, obviously.

Mr. Hatchel: One thing to keep in mind, I think, and of course the traffic engineers needs to look at it but if you do an aquatic facility and plan for a large one or want to reserve the space usually it is about a four hour stay at a water park like this, maybe all day if it gets to be a big one but not in the beginning if you can keep it closer to the main intersection then that traffic is leaving the area sooner and going in multiple directions rather than if you bury down inside the site. Just a thought.

Mayor Martin: We do need more in depth review of what the operations would look like, maybe a five year projection of operations and maintenance based on, I don't know, if it would be a large, large facility but maybe a medium facility with the ability to grow...both, yeah medium and large. But we definitely need to see what that looks like. I agree, the taxpayers want it, we may need to have conversation about what that looks like, if they would be willing to pay for it with a bond referendum. Also knowing that we are going to have to look at pay as you go, family membership, and really hone down on what that would look like based on the size and scale that we would be wanting to put in.

Mr. Hatchel: You could leverage the family memberships if they buy a seasonal membership for the summer, maybe even a \$1 or maybe a little more per family member if you went everyday during the summer. Those become really economical, and it gives you money up front for operations that is a burden to handle on your revenue.

Mayor Martin: We saw that when we went to the Chicagoland area. With the family memberships and they had all the tiers for family and spouse. It can be done, it's just a matter of making sure we do it right.

Mr. Hatchel: Well I hope you get a facility.

Councilman Pickett: I have a question for you, what is the return rate on, as far as attendance wise, for these parks? Because what I see a lot of, especially...like I used to work not too far from the Rapids, and I would go by there two or three times a day and over the years I saw the

attendance slowly decline. What I am interested in is, how many times a year does a typical family attend one of these parks?

Mr. Deines: The typical annual or seasonal pass holder will probably go 2.5-5 times. Usually that season pass is priced about 2.5-3 times of a one day membership. A lot of it is geared toward getting that guaranteed revenue instead of the pay as you go revenue. We have definitely seen that parks that do not continually update or add amenities that they can have that declining attendance, plus if other facilities come into the market that is something that definitely can have an effect and pull attendance away from the park itself. With that being said, I would say that the newer parks will have an upward trajectory but then at some point it will level off, then it will start to come back down. When we look at projections, we try not to look at the peak, but we also don't try to look at the valley. We try to look at that middle ground, what is reasonable to expect on a year to year basis.

Mayor Martin: You also have to build it so that you can do upgrades later on; putting the structural components...because you're going to have to refresh it over time.

Mr. Hatchel: A component of that revenue too is going to be your swim lessons, water aerobics, water Zumba. We just finished a study at old southwest 50 meter pool in Largo and they got a big Zumba class. Creative programming all those things...so if you have a basic kind of municipal facility to start with, it can start with that if it has to and then grow into a water park if there is desire and opportunity for it. That helps.

Vice Mayor Caraballo: When we come back for further discussion, I really want to investigate the competitive piece. Because this was more targeted for our water park, I really want to discuss the competitive piece to see what is the need in the market currently. If there isn't a need, then there isn't a need. But if the need is great and we create the right facility then you could literally have an offset where you could build your water park onto that later on and be able to provide that additional amenity and help pay for the offset. I really want to look at that and create potential a destination where people come which in turn when you create a destination you get tourism and that brings the bigger need for the water park. I really want to see that. Then in regard to our County partners, I would like to see if there is a commitment there to that. I don't know if you're interested in that, but I would like to

see...potentially, Mr. Blackburn, I would like to see us present this presentation to Mr. Tipton and have it maybe presented at maybe a formal or whatever they see fit and see if there is a commitment to the County in regard to funding of some sort of aquatic center or idea. I just want to see if they will actually agree to it on record and then we could actually have those conversations in the future. Because I have heard it in passing but I have yet to hear it on record.

Mayor Martin: I believe on a staff level it has been discussed and the verbal commitment was \$4 million. But you're right, we haven't...and that's why I said we can't rely on that but...

Mr. Hatchel: One cautionary tale. Costs have been going up rapidly on aquatic facilities, on everything as you go. But what would have been maybe planned as a \$4 million family aquatic center four or five years ago...we just did a small one that has little bits of everything. It has a competition pool, and it has a children's play pool but no river or wave pool. That facility has a \$6 million facility at Lincoln Park in Manatee County that is going to open this summer. That cost range that we gave you, we're trying to be conservative knowing you're a couple years off by the time you decide to do it and design it, at least a couple of years off, then build it. It is about a years' worth of planning and design typically, and then a year to build it. Keep that in mind too.

**6.b** Public Hearing Policy Discussion

[2022-063](#)

James Stokes, City Attorney, explained there are times when Council is not in favor of an ordinance, but they do not want to turn it down on the first reading, because they have not had the public hearing. He stated his advice usually is to approve the ordinance, have the public hearing, and then disapprove it or vote on it at that point. He noted that Councilwoman Morgan initially suggested bringing the public hearing to the first reading. He indicated that nothing in their Charter or state law is against doing that, as they just state a public hearing is required. He said that only a few issues need two public hearings and the City would comply with doing that. Mr. Stokes explained that having the public hearing at first reading would require the need to publish it 10 days before the first hearing and republish it if there are any substantial changes, and the Clerk's Office has to pay for those publication costs. He said there are pros and cons to both ways of holding the public hearing, but it is Council's discretion and legally it can be done either way.

Mayor Martin inquired how this would affect items getting on the

agenda. Mr. Blackburn stated that developers are usually anxious to get items approved by the Planning Board and on the next Council Meeting. He said they get a lot of items, because they do not have to publish those being heard for the first time. He stated it will probably delay some items, as they need to have the 10 days. He said there is a timeline when the newspaper requires the ad, and if that is missed it goes to the next week. He stated if it does not line up with the Council Meeting, there could be a gap between the Planning Board and when the item is heard. He added that he has worked in communities that have done it both ways, and the timeline is really the main issue.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she did not see this as a priority item right now. She said Councilwoman Morgan is not there and this is her discussion item. Vice Mayor Caraballo suggested tabling this item to their next Special Council Meeting, so Councilwoman Morgan can be part of the conversation.

Mayor Martin stated she would like to hear the other Councilmembers' stance on the issue, as she did not want to bring it back if it was not needed. She said they have not had significant issues to where there needs to be a change. She stated she did not want to cause further delays, worry about all the timelines and extra timelines with the newspapers, and then have to readvertise. She asked why they were fixing something that was not broken. She said it is a preference and, whether or not the other Councilmembers want to table it, she is going to stick with what they have.

Councilman Bonna stated he is interested in giving the public the utmost opportunity to weigh-in on an issue. He said having the first reading when the Council hears the presentations, gives the public the opportunity to prepare and voice their opinion at the second reading. He asked if some municipalities allow comment at both hearings. City Attorney Stokes responded in the affirmative and stated most of the municipalities listed in the memo do it the way they do. He said if someone is there to comment, they will let them discuss it. He added that a full presentation is not done at both meetings, but if somebody wants to speak at the nonpublic hearing, they usually allow them. Councilman Bonna stated his current preference is to leave things as they are, as it gives the public the greatest opportunity for input. However, he would not mind tabling it.

Councilman Picket stated the current format works fine, as everyone is

used to their process. He said Mayor Martin gives the people a lot of latitude if they have something to say. He stated he was in favor of keeping it the way it is. Mayor Martin stated she would never deny anyone the opportunity to speak, as they are a public entity and are there for the public.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she agreed. She said she thinks the process works the way it is. She stated she understands where Councilwoman Morgan is coming from, as they have had situations where the Council clearly is not in favor of an item, but it has to be approved for it to go to the public hearing. She asked City Attorney Stokes if, in those situations, he would interject and state, "Council it seems there is not a will to continue this, but because of the public hearing process . . . .", so the public in a very controversial situation knows the Council is not trying to continue it. She thanked Councilwoman Morgan for bringing this up, as it is a fair discussion, but she believes the process is fine that way it is.

Council consensus was to stay with their current Public Hearing Policy.

**7. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:51 AM.

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Sally Walsh, City Clerk

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Traci Mehl, Deputy City Clerk