

City of Port St. Lucie
City Council / City Staff Workshop
Meeting Minutes

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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Wednesday, August 2, 2023

8:30 AM

**Community Center, 2195 SE Airoso
Blvd**

1. Meeting Called to Order

A City Council/City Staff Retreat of the CITY COUNCIL of the City of Port St. Lucie was called to order by Mayor Martin on August 2, 2023, at 8:49 a.m., at City of Port St. Lucie Community Center, 2195 SE Airoso Blvd., Port St. Lucie, FL 34984.

2. Roll Call

Councilmembers Present:

Mayor Martin

Vice Mayor Caraballo

Councilwoman Morgan

Councilman Pickett

Councilman Bonna

3. Pledge of Allegiance

There was nothing heard under this item.

4. Public to be Heard

Resident Deborah Beutel spoke on the safety of roadways including Port St. Lucie Blvd/Aster Rd and Brighton St/Gatlin Blvd. Mayor Martin advised that she had spoken to City Manager Merejo about Aster Rd, and City Manager Merejo noted that Public Works was looking into this issue. Public Works Director Heath Stocton provided updates on Aster Rd, stating that the streetlights were checked and found to be functional, and that other streetlights in the area that were out would be repaired that week. He also informed that once the new development was completed, residents would no longer be able to make a left-hand turn onto

Port St. Lucie Blvd, which could increase the safety of this area. Mayor Martin requested that they also address Brighton St, to which Mr. Stocton informed that the area was very limited in access points, and limiting the left turn would push more traffic onto Aviation Ave, which was having issues as well. He advised that they would look into this issue again.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired if the City had anything that they could use to work with the Police Department on collecting data to see if there were issues with certain conflict points/streets and to analyze where improvements would need to go, to which Mr. Stocton stated that although they work with the Police Department, Public Works uses a tool provided by the University of Florida for analytics that mapped hot spots for accidents, and he discussed the procedures in using this tool, as well as for how they ranked what they have currently done. Councilwoman Morgan stated that the Transportation Planning Organization did a study of all intersections with accidents/crashes for the entire County, and she would have it emailed to the Council.

Resident Diane Goldberg requested an Ordinance to remove category 1 invasive plants from unimproved properties, noting that birds and wildlife would spread the seeds to all surrounding properties. She also suggested that there be an increase in Public Work's budget for invasive plant removal to \$230,000.

5. Workshop Business

5.a Hear a Presentation on the Future of Medical Resources from HCA Florida

[2023-665](#)

Vice Mayor Caraballo noted that in the future, they could discuss how the City could strategically plan to work with their partners to help with workforce issues in the community. Strategic Initiatives Director Kate Parmelee stated that they could create an innovation partnership and work with providers about how to interact with and sell the area.

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) Corey Lovelace, HCA Florida CEO, presented to the Council and discussed the mission, vision, and core values of HCA Florida. He provided a brief history of HCA and data for the East Florida Division and the St. Lucie branch. He advised that they would be expanding their Urgent Care presence and campus development/expansion due to need and demand, which would include a second-floor renovation, 3 story medical office building, and tower expansion. Mr. Lovelace then discussed service line highlights including Oncology, Women's & Children, General Surgery, Orthopedic & Spine, and Urology. He provided information on the Robotics Program that was used to assist in various types of surgery, as well as informed of awards & recognitions. He mentioned that while they have many providers, there was a need for more, and noted that HCA had their own nursing

school. He also noted that available beds were an issue, and that they would be adding 15 additional beds.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired as to why the hospital industry was not mobilizing and asked Mr. Lovelace to speak on the challenges, to which Mr. Lovelace described the difficulty of the approval processes. Vice Mayor Caraballo then inquired on HCA's plans for customer care, to which Mr. Lovelace discussed improvements in care times, staffing, and additional beds.

Ms. Parmelee thanked HCA for their support of the Village Green grant application and advised that the City was successful in obtaining that grant. She stated that the City would be assisting HCA in the design process, and that they would also be asking for support for construction dollars that would help provide additional bus facilities for the hospital healthcare staff.

(Clerk's Note: Item 5i Mobility Fees from Day 1 August 1, 2023, was heard at this time.)

Transportation Planning and Infrastructure Projects
Prioritization

[2023-656](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) Public Works Director Heath Stocton provided the 2023 National Community Survey results. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated that she would like to work on a collective marketing opportunity for the public to provide more education and information, and Mayor Martin stated that the City would need to do better with getting out into the community. The Council and Mr. Stocton then held a brief discussion on transportation times across the city.

Planning & Zoning Director Mary Savage-Dunham presented on long-range planning and discussed the Comprehensive Plan, noting that they were required to plan for the 5-year period and the 10-year period and planned to develop a 20-year plan. She discussed the plans & initiatives, noting that there would be a Multimodal Plan and a Mobility Plan for 2045, with the inclusion of a Gatlin Blvd study for FY23/24, Savona Blvd study for FY24/25, and a Traffic Zero program.

Ms. Savage-Dunham continued to discuss the Comprehensive Plan and she advised that Council could have ongoing discussions with staff regarding project prioritization as it was not a plan amendment, and updates to the plan could be done at Council's direction. City Manager Merejo also noted that the cost of infrastructure had increased and that the development of the western area would be costly and take years to

complete.

Mr. Stocton then discussed City Mobility projects including bike/pedestrian safety, intersections, roadways, sidewalks, and improvements of adaptive signals to St. Lucie West Blvd as well as a short-term implementation to St. Lucie West Blvd which would convert an existing right-turn lane into a continuous third lane. He then discussed funding planning recommendations and included information on budget numbers for FY24/25 and FY25/26. Council and City Staff then discussed funding amounts, Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), phasing for various projects, and design and construction for Torino Regional Park and schools. Mayor Martin recommended that they hold a discussion at a special meeting regarding considerations for the Torino Road Network. Ms. Parmelee advised that they had until December 2024 to obligate the American Rescue Plan funds for Torino, and it had to be expended by 2026, and Mayor Martin suggested that they hold discussions on bond financing. Discussions continued on various project ideas and Mr. Stocton then presented staff recommended priorities for roadways.

A break was called at 10:54 a.m., and the meeting resumed at 11:15 a.m.

Mr. Stocton continued his presentation by discussing anticipated funding sources for sidewalks & trails and staff recommended priorities for intersections. Mayor Martin discussed traffic issues for Paar Dr and Darwin Blvd and suggested the implementation of a roundabout, and Councilwoman Morgan discussed turning lanes on Wylder. Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired about Southbend Blvd, to which Mr. Stocton recommended having the inclusion of intersection improvements. He then provided funding planning recommendations for safety, conceptual roads, intersections, sidewalks/trails, and traffic calming. Colt Schwerdt, Assistant Public Works Director, discussed Commerce Center Dr and stated that they had 2 developers impacting that intersection, so they were working on Greenpointe and coordinating with the County because they had a Traffic Impact Analysis that stated that they would need to signalize that intersection when the roadway failed. The Council and Mr. Stocton then discussed various intersections listed on the priorities list.

Mr. Stocton discussed Pedestrian & Bike Safety, providing the top staff recommended priorities and exhibiting a proposed multimodal intersection, high intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK), and the addition of a pedestrian crossings. He further discussed the various projects and Vice Mayor Caraballo stated that once the Port opened, people would use the intersections for parking, to which Mr. Stocton moved it to priority 2. The Council, Mr. Stocton, and Ms. Parmelee further discussed funding, match

funding, and grants for these projects.

Mr. Stocton then presented the Mobility projects budget for FY24/25, FY25/26, and roadway funds. He concluded the presentation by providing staff recommended priorities for priorities 1-7, as well as next steps, such as finalizing the 20-year priority list, programming projects into Fiscal Years, presenting a 20-year prioritized list and recommended 10-year CIP to City Council for approval, and the continuation of the execution of half-cent sales tax, gas tax, and grant funded projects. Mayor Martin stated that Finance Director Stephen Okiye could advise them of what they could afford to bond and go from there and noted that the biggest issue was capacity and the shorter-term projects kept building up, so the more of those projects that they could get done through bond financing, the better off they would be. Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired on if they do any short-term investments, to which Mr. Okiye responded in the affirmative.

It was the consensus of the Council to utilize the banked money to pay off the bond debt.

A lunch break was called at 11:54 a.m., and the meeting resumed at 1:05 p.m.

5.b City Manager's FY 2023-24 Proposed Budget Overview

[2023-651](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) OMB Director Caroline Sturgis presented the proposed budget and stated that the approach was provided by guidelines requested by the Council. She discussed economic considerations such as growth in population, an improved housing market, high inflation, and interest rates. She stated that FY23/24 had a decrease of -3.6% from FY22/23, and she discussed the City Manager's various goals such as implementing the Strategic Plan, maintaining the safest cities status, and maintaining infrastructure.

Ms. Sturgis discussed the tax base increase for 2023, which had increased by 22.9%. She provided statistics for the City's Millage Rate, noting that this would be the 8th consecutive year that the rate would be decreased if adopted. She then presented the proposed Operating & Crosstown Voter Debt Millage, and Vice Mayor Caraballo and Mayor Martin noted that the City may not continue to be able to make a decrease in the future due to the increase in levels of service and costs. Ms. Sturgis stated that they would need to continue to create a balanced budget.

Ms. Sturgis then discussed the impact of the Millage Rate reduction, noting that if it was not reduced, a resident would have a tax bill of \$909.80, but by creating a decrease, their bill would be less and their property values

would be increased. Ms. Sturgis then provided a breakdown of the tax bill and emphasized the cost per resident for City Services per year for the General Fund operations. Vice Mayor Caraballo noted that for FY24, Port St. Lucie remained at #2 for the safest city in the U.S.

Ms. Sturgis continued her presentation by discussing the City Manager's proposed budget. She discussed revenue assumptions and expenditure assumptions, and highlighted the \$413 million debt reduction, which was 40% over 14 years. Ms. Sturgis also provided information on long-term debt per resident, which was expected to be reduced for FY23/24. Mayor Martin inquired as to if there was something coming up next year that they could utilize the extra money from the bond refinancing for, to which Mr. Okiye replied that there would be nothing scheduled for next year except for one issuance, and Ms. Sturgis added that they would be looking to pay off the CRA debt in FY24/25.

Ms. Sturgis then presented proposed staffing, noting that for FY23/24 the City was expected to have 1,412 full-time staff, but the ratio of employees to resident did not reach the same level as pre-recession. She stated that they were monitoring various threats such as increased demand for services, inflation, and low unemployment rate. She concluded her presentation by discussing the potential outcomes such as having a responsible, fiscally conservative budget and having city staff be committed to outstanding customer service, efficiency & effectiveness, and improving the quality of life for all citizens.

Ms. Sturgis highlighted the new City tool that allowed residents to observe how much of the tax bill was coming into the City and where the funds were being allocated, and she provided a demonstration. Upon Councilwoman Morgan's inquiries regarding taxing, exemptions, and special assessments, Mr. Okiye advised that they would provide her with the information.

- 5.c** Tentative Approval of the City Manager's Fiscal Year (FY) [2023-654](#)
2023-24 Proposed Budget, and Setting the Tentative Millage Rate (the Rate of which cannot be Exceeded).

Ms. Sturgis gave a presentation on Departmental Budgets, noting that the City was required to adopt a budget by state law, and that it was guided by the Strategic Plan. She stated that the City adopted one budget every year and discussed the amount of various fundings, such as where the money comes from and where it was allocated. She discussed various types of budget constraints, as well as fund types that the City had.

Ms. Sturgis discussed the Operating Budget by department and provided

brief overviews and noted that if the Council were to approve of the proposals for the departments, there would be no action needed. She discussed the General Fund proposed budget, with a spending plan of \$704.9 million, as well as enhancements to the funds, such as grant matching and digital signage. She continued by discussing the proposed budgets and enhancements for the City Council Office, City Manager's Office, Office of Economic Development, City Clerk's Office, Finance, Human Resources, Risk Management, and Communications.

Ms. Prohaska then inquired if the Council wished to use Census data or BEBR data for city publications, and upon discussion it was the consensus of the Council to continue to use Census data.

Ms. Sturgis continued by discussing the proposed departmental budgets for Emergency Operations and Neighborhood Services. Mayor Martin requested an update on the website redesign, to which Ms. Prohaska replied that they had a proposed launch of January 2024. Ms. Sturgis continued with presentations on Information Technology, Office of Management & Budget, General Government, City Attorney, Planning & Zoning, and the Police Department. A brief discussion was held on police staffing regarding the growth of the city, and Ms. Sturgis continued with presentations on Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful, Public Works, Facilities Maintenance, Parks & Recreation, MidFlorida Credit Union Event Center, and non-departmental budgets.

A break was called at 2:54 p.m., and the meeting resumed at 3:11 p.m.

Ms. Sturgis continued her presentation by discussing General Fund operating costs for Solid Waste, Community Redevelopment Agency, Public Works Road & Bridge Fund, and Public Works Stormwater Fund. Mayor Martin requested that they review the deficit during the 2024 Winter Workshop, and she inquired about the CDD process timeline, to which Mr. Stocton replied that they had anticipated starting within the next year.

She continued with a presentation on Building and noted that personnel and operating expenses were not on the slide but were in the budget book. Mayor Martin inquired as to how the trend was for the current year regarding entities going through the loophole for inspections, to which Joel Dramis, Building Official, stated that it was slightly trending upwards, but that due to staff and customer service, it was not as prevalent in Port St. Lucie as it was in other Florida communities. He also stated that they were recreating their certificate of occupancy to inform property owners that it will be forever maintained in city records that the project was not done by city services, and that the city was not responsible to investigate claims

against those properties.

Ms. Sturgis continued with a presentation on Utility Systems, and Councilwoman Morgan inquired on if the operating expenses were due to locates not being done and being cut by contractors, to which Bill Jones, Chief Information Officer, responded in the negative, stating that most of the cuts that they had experienced were due to not calling in locates or incidental damage. Councilwoman Morgan asked if the City had begun issuing fines for contractors that do not call in for locates, to which Kevin Matyjaszek, Utilities Director, responded in the affirmative. Further discussion was held on fiber system stations and locates.

Ms. Sturgis concluded the presentation on Utilities and continued with the Medical Fund. Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired on an update for the Employee Clinic, to which Roger Jacobs, Facilities Director, replied that they had been meeting with another contractor to get a bid. Vice Mayor Caraballo then inquired on the status of the contract with the current vendor to which Natalie Cabrera, Human Resources Director, advised that they had an amended agreement, and Kristina Ciuperger, Deputy City Manager, stated that the new proposal for the update had been sent to the new owners and the City was awaiting their feedback by the end of the week. Ms. Sturgis then continued the presentation on the Medical Fund and noted that there was a mislabeling in the slide and it should describe the funds transfer. She informed that there would be a new empathy enhancement for employees that provided comprehensive support for navigating grief, to which Mayor Martin requested further information. Ms. Cabrera provided additional information and Mayor Martin advised that she would have liked a one-on-one to discuss this before it came to the workshop due to services already provided to employees for this topic. Councilwoman Morgan responded in the affirmative to Mayor Martin's comments and Mayor Martin informed that she would not be in support of this item. Vice Mayor Caraballo expressed support for this item and Ms. Cabrera stated that she would meet with the Council for further discussion, and advised that since the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been an uptick in mental health behavioral specialist type claims of 600%.

Ms. Sturgis continued with a presentation on Mobility Fees, Parks Impact Fee Fund, Police Impact Fee Fund, and Other Special Revenue Funds. She then provided a fees & charges update on Stormwater, Street Lighting, Water & Sewer, and Solid Waste rates, and she noted that the new rates had been tentatively approved by Council on July 24, 2023. She then provided data and updates for the FY 23/24 Capital Budget.

There being no further discussion, Councilman Pickett moved to set the

Operating Millage at 4.7057. Vice Mayor Caraballo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Councilwoman Morgan moved to set the Debt Service Millage at 0.4943. Councilman Pickett seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to approve the additional staffing levels as approved by the City Manager. Councilman Pickett seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Councilman Pickett moved to tentatively approve the Operating & amended Capital Budget for the next Fiscal Year. Councilwoman Morgan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

It was the consensus of the Council to put the unallocated funding into reserves.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired on a timeline for the reopening of the riverwalk that was damaged in a fire, to which Bradley Keen, Parks & Recreation Assistant Director, informed that upon receiving the final report of the cause of the fire, they would be setting a plan to make the repairs and address it with the contractor. He also noted that they were in talks with the insurance company regarding the northern side of the boardwalk, and that they had a contract with a design firm to design the repair, along with 2 proposals for them. Mayor Martin requested to have the repairs completed prior to the park opening. He also discussed current public access to the boardwalk.

Vice Mayor Caraballo and Mr. Dramis then provided an update on Altitude's construction process of the Sandpiper Bay Resort. Deputy City Manager Teresa Lamar-Sarno advised that they were supposed to have an amendment to their PUD and be open in a couple of weeks, and that they were made aware of this 6 months ago. Vice Mayor Caraballo recommended informing the County due to the topic being related to tourism. The Council and Staff then discussed the resort employee layoffs regarding this topic, noting that they had to be reported to the City.

6. Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Sally Walsh, City Clerk

Jasmin De Freese, Deputy City Clerk