

City of Port St. Lucie

City Council 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

Please visit www.cityofpsl.com/tv for new public comment options.

Thursday, July 25, 2024

8:30 AM

**Community Center, 2195 SE Airoso
Blvd**

Summer Workshop

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 July 25, 2024, 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 Diane Goldberg spoke on the benefit of planting more trees and she requested permission to work with the City Manager on her suggestion to change the City's Codes to make groupings of 3 or more trees of various species.

5. Workshop Business

5.a Increasing Resident Access to Nature and High-Performance

[2024-721](#)

Public Spaces: Hear an Update on the Work of the City Team
in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative
Innovation Track

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) Deputy City Manager Kate Parmelee introduced the item to the Council. (Clerk's Note: Alexis Baum appeared via Zoom.) Alexis Baum, Bloomberg Harvard, briefly spoke to the Council on the success of the team and the program, and Project Coordinator Sabrina McCleod presented on the Bloomberg Pathway. She discussed the path to innovation, ethnographic interviewing, speaking to residents, and the National Honor Society Centennial. Elijah Wooten, Economic Development Administrator, discussed speaking to the Black Women Walking Group and the Dawn Bloomfield Caribbean American Cultural Group, and Kelly Boatwright, Parks & Recreation Administrator, spoke on having discussion sessions with various residents, including at the Citizens Summit.

Ms. Parmelee introduced the Portfolio of Ideas and the ideas that are being tested. Community Services Administrator Jennifer Perkey spoke on Buzz Stops, Accreditation and Performance Manager Summer Burdick spoke on Explore PSL, and Communications Director Sarah Prohaska spoke on the Green Land Bank and next steps for testing. Bloomberg Harvard Summer Fellow Nikki Zheng spoke on the step to identify where to prioritize the Portfolio of Ideas and further develop the portfolio for final review and adoption by the City Council.

Ms. Parmelee stated that they would be working with the City's Project Managers to teach these skills and come up with resident co-created solutions. Vice Mayor Caraballo and Ms. Parmelee discussed outreach and how far the input footprint would go, with Ms. Parmelee noting that they needed to look at a micro level to look closely at the problem. Vice Mayor Caraballo recommended doing the Brazilian pepper cleanup in some neighborhoods with the budget they have, and she discussed stakeholder portfolios. Mayor Martin discussed having outreach and concerns with maintenance for the proposed bus stops. She also stated that if they were going to do a project, they needed to do it fully and not halfway.

The Council and Ms. Parmelee then discussed the Green Land project. Councilman Bonna inquired if it was anticipated that the Green Land Bank would be run by the City or a non-profit, to which Ms. Parmelee replied that it would be led by the City in partnership with others and with opportunities for additional sponsorships. They then further discussed projections for the Green Land project and the bus stops.

5.b Present Update on PSLPD's Training Facility [2024-708](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) Assistant Chief Niemzyck discussed the history of the project, the upcoming groundbreaking, and the project costs and funding sources.

5.c Hear Update on PSLPD's Recruitment & Retention [2024-710](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) Chief Del Toro provided a brief history of PSLPD and discussed the challenges for recruitment and retention including the growth of the city and retirements. He discussed sworn hire statistics and current staffing, the Epic Recruiting process, and strategic initiatives. He also detailed the steps for the recruitment process.

Councilman Pickett inquired about the timeframe for classes for the new recruits, to which Chief Del Toro replied that it would be in the fall, and that next year would have a spring academy and onboard 30+ recruits. Vice Mayor Caraballo and Chief Del Toro discussed the youth obtaining interest for Law Enforcement and issues with recruitment not just in the City, but the Country, as well as gaining more recruits that are Port St. Lucie residents. They also discussed education for being an officer, and Chief Del Toro stated that the students would be allowed to use the training facility.

A break was called at 10:09 a.m., and the meeting resumed at 10:30 a.m.

5.d FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget [2024-702](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) City Manager Merejo provided an opening statement and OMB Director Caroline Sturgis presented to the Council. She exhibited the budget strategy and discussed the budget approach for various economic considerations such as high inflation, new construction, and property values. She discussed the proposed budget increases for FY24/25 (13.97%) and the General Fund (17.07%), as well as revenue assumptions for the millage rate, taxable value, economic revenues, and proposed rate increases.

Ms. Sturgis discussed expenditure assumptions for various items such as capital costs, liability insurance, health insurance program, salary costs, operations cost, staffing levels, debt reduction, and fuel costs. She then presented on the tax base increase and millage history, as well as the impact of millage reduction and proposed operating & Crosstown voter debt millage (Tax) reduced. She also discussed city services including the cost per resident, comparisons of Port St. Lucie to other cities in Florida, and investments in infrastructure.

Ms. Sturgis then discussed proposed staffing changes, including 60 new positions due to growth in the City and the staffing ratio per resident. She discussed opportunities for budget increases, threats to the budget, outcomes for a responsible and fiscally conservative budget, and city staff commitment.

Vice Mayor Caraballo discussed how growth is a challenge to the budget and needing to ensure that they have the money to take care of the residents. Councilman Bonna expressed favorable opinion to city staff for managing the budget, and Mayor Martin expressed concern for costs not coming down and continued future reductions to the Operating Millage. Ms. Sturgis stated that they had not talked about the additional efforts of the OMB Office with the City Manager and departments, and she discussed the long-range planning. Mayor Martin expressed concerns about paying attention and being observant, and she stated that they might get to a point where they need to scale back on positions because they needed to make sure they could afford to operate. She noted that the goal was to get the employee-per-resident ratio up. Vice Mayor Caraballo discussed additional challenges.

City Manager Merejo stated that building new construction needed to pay for itself, that they could not subsidize growth with General Fund dollars, and that they needed to look at the impacts being created outside of the City. Further discussion ensued on pivoting and adapting, and Councilman Pickett discussed annexation. Councilman Bonna discussed fees and getting more efficient over time.

Ms. Sturgis continued the presentation and gave a budget overview for FY24/25. She discussed the budget at a glance, where the money comes from, and where the money goes. She then discussed the proposed operating budget, fund types, and budget restraints. Ms. Sturgis then presented on the departmental budget for the City Council, City Manager's Office, City Clerk's Office, Finance, Human Resources, Medical Insurance Fund, Communications, Emergency Management, and Neighborhood Services. Mayor Martin inquired what the new full-time position for Neighborhood Services would be for, to which Director Carmen Capezzuto advised that they would be moving a part-time position to full-time.

Ms. Sturgis continued the presentation with Community Development Block Grant, State Housing Initiative Partnership, Risk Management, Information Technology, Office of Management & Budget, General Government, and City Attorney's Office. Mayor Martin inquired if the increase in budget for outside legal counsel was due to Waste Pro

litigations, to which City Attorney Berrios responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Sturgis then presented for Planning and Zoning, Police Department, Police Impact Fee Fund, Solid Waste Operation, Office of Solid Waste – Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful, Facilities – Building Maintenance, Facilities – Municipal Garage, Parks & Recreation, Parks & Recreation – Golf Course, Parks Impact Fee Fund, MIDFlorida Credit Union Event Center, Community Redevelopment Agency, and multiple Public Works funds.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired as to how much they would be looking at if they added the additional \$5 Stormwater fee if it passed, to which Ms. Sturgis replied that it would be about \$600,000 and noted that the proposed budget included that recommendation. Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired as to how long they had before they were to discuss the Mobility Fee agreement, to which City Attorney Berrios replied that he would obtain a date. Assistant City Manager Tera Lamar-Sarno stated that the 4-year contract was up in 2026 and that they were looking at updating the fees/plan.

Ms. Sturgis concluded the departmental presentation with Utilities. She then presented on the Capital Budget recommendations and noted that this had already been approved by Council in April. Mayor Martin requested that additional information on tentative approvals and changes be included in future presentations. Ms. Sturgis exhibited key dates for Budget Hearings and Mayor Martin discussed Council attendance for the FY24/25 Proposed Budget Information Sessions. The Council, City Attorney, and City Clerk then discussed the formalities of noticing the public and attendance.

Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to approve the preliminary Millage rate not to exceed 4.6807 for the Operating Millage and 0.3743 for the Debt Millage, for a total Millage of 5.0550. Councilman Bonna seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

Councilman Pickett moved to tentatively approve the additional staffing level recommendations. Vice Mayor Caraballo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

Councilman Pickett moved to tentatively approve the amended Operating and Capital budgets for the next Fiscal Year. Councilman Bonna seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to authorize the preparation and advertising for a Resolution/Ordinance to adopt FY24/25 Fee Schedules for the Water

Rate, Sewer Rate, Solid Waste Rate, Stormwater Rate, and Street Lighting. Councilwoman Morgan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

Vice Mayor Caraballo suggested having further discussion and analysis on the budget at the Winter Workshop and Strategic Planning, and Mayor Martin responded in favor.

A lunch break was called at 12:11 p.m., and the meeting resumed at 1:30 p.m.

(Clerk's Note: The meeting experienced technical difficulties, and a break was called from 1:30 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.)

- 5.e** Smart & Connected City: Hear an Update from St. Lucie Public Schools and Indian River State College [2024-720](#)

It was the consensus of the Council to hear this item at a future Regular Council Workshop.

- 5.f** Provide a Review of the City's Debt Portfolio. [2024-707](#)

Charlie Proulx presented a debt review and discussed major reasons for debt, benefits of issuing debt, the debt policy, debt comparisons, and debt per capita. He discussed Port St. Lucie's debt reduction and population vs. debt, noting that while the population has been increasing, the debt has been decreasing. He then exhibited outstanding debt by category and discussed refunding occurrences, current bond ratings, and total debt portfolio by bond.

- 5.g** Hear a Review Regarding the City's Investment Portfolio. [2024-709](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) (Clerk's Note: John Grady appeared via Zoom.) John Grady presented on the portfolio structure and provided an economic update. He exhibited the Gross Domestic Product from March 2021 to March 2024, and discussed the Consumer Price Index, Inflation CPI, FOMC Dot Plot, Federal Funds rate expectations for January vs. July 2024, interest rates remaining volatile, and yield curve flattening for 2024.

- 5.h** Present Analysis of Recognized User Groups (RUGs) Policy & Field Use & Demand Study [2024-674](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) (Clerk's Note: Jack Kardy, appeared via Zoom.) Jack Kardy, J Kardy's Strategies, presented to the Council on a field use & demand study. He discussed the purpose of the study, mapping and inventory analysis, and RUG LOS in potential sports market. He went over the field use review and analysis,

projected player capacity, NRPA benchmarking, RUG Sports Market segments served, RUG focus group and survey, and peer agency benchmarking. Mr. Kardy then discussed solving current congestion at Swan Park, planning for continued soccer growth, policy and practice considerations, LOS considerations, and master planning. He also discussed the RUG policy & practices recommendations, as well as future field planning/use considerations.

Bradley Keen, Parks & Recreation Assistant Director, discussed programming partners, use of synthetic turf, programming multiple sports on the fields, demand for the fields, and transferring the current way of administering the recognized user groups programs from the Parks Operations Division to the Recreation Division.

Councilman Pickett stated that there are two groups paying and inquired at which point that no longer is recreational and becomes a business, to which Mr. Keen replied that they should have a conversation about this, and he noted that it has become common in youth sports to pay the sports staff. Mayor Martin discussed charging user fees to maintain operations, and she stated that they need to look at increases, to which Mr. Keen recommended to phase the increases because it would be substantial. Mayor Martin then expressed favor of the presentation and stated that standardized procedures should be in place, and she and Mr. Keen further discussed the presentation.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated that she would like to have their model RFP come forward, as well as customizing the fields. She also expressed concerns for the long-term maintenance and investments of the parks. Mr. Keen clarified that this was just the first step, and Mayor Martin stated that this needs to be a priority. Mr. Keen stated that he would like the opportunity to meet with the City leadership team and that he would like to provide an update in 6 months. Mayor Martin inquired if it would be helpful to keep Mr. Kardy on board, to which Mr. Keen responded in the affirmative. Councilwoman Morgan discussed opinions on the operating hours of the parks and parking issues for those that live close to the parks. Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired about having one-on-one meetings and have further discussions at the Council Winter Workshop, and City Manager Merejo stated that 3 years was unacceptable to look at planning this item, and that they needed to look at the fields that are not lit to make a budget. He added that the sooner they could get this done, the better it would be for the organization. Vice Mayor Caraballo and Mr. Keen discussed contracts, and Vice Mayor Caraballo requested that City Attorney Berrios coordinate this, but not lock them in.

Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to approve the Field Use & Demand Study with the condition that the Council receive an update at a minimum timeframe of the Winter Workshop. Councilman Pickett seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

6. Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Sally Walsh, City Clerk

Jasmin De Freese, Deputy City Clerk