

City of Port St. Lucie
City Council / City Staff Retreat
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

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

Friday, February 25, 2022

8:30 AM

**Community Center, 2195 SE Airoso
Blvd**

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 February 25, 2022, at 8:38 AM, at Port St. Lucie Community Center, 2195 SE Airoso Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, Florida.

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present:

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Martin lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. She also requested a moment of silence for the people of Ukraine.

4. Public to be Heard

No comments were made by the public.

5. Retreat Business

5.a Provide Tentative Direction on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23

[2022-173](#)

City Budget

Caroline Sturgis, Director of OMB, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Budget Outlook for FY 2022-23. She reviewed the City

Manager's direction and emphasis as well as the budget process; provided a national and local economic overview; showed the budget trends for taxable value, new construction/additions, ad valorem revenue, and millage rate for Port St. Lucie; and discussed the FY 2022-23 outlook, millage rate objectives, and Council priorities.

Ms. Sturgis stated the planning budget includes approximately 30 positions and may change once the City Manager reviews all requests. She noted the projected deficit in the Road and Bridge Fund and emphasized the vulnerable status of the Stormwater Fund. She said a \$5.00 rate increase would help offset increased operational costs. Ms. Sturgis concluded her presentation by asking for Council's thoughts on their priorities and direction on the millage rate.

Each Council member commented on their desire to reduce the millage rate, while maintaining the City's level of service. They also spoke to being selective with City projects, looking at the proposed FTE's, and addressing the Stormwater Fund. Mayor Martin inquired as to when they could discuss the funds being transferred to MPUD's and PUD's, to which the City Manager stated that staff would complete their analysis and present it to Council during their Capital Improvement Plan update in April.

Mayor Martin stated that 1/10th of a mill decrease is being recommended right now. She explained the City Manager will consider the priority projects and go through the budget process, and Council will see what that looks like and find a balance at the Summer Retreat. The City Manager indicated he believed they will be able to achieve their goals based on the current funding. Mayor Martin confirmed with the City Manager that the budget was being planned as if the Millage Rate was reduced by 1/10 of a mill, to which Council agreed.

Vice Mayor Caraballo suggested having a conversation to discuss strategies on how to address those areas and positions that are unable to be funded at this time. She also requested a "wins list" from Communications that she could use when speaking to the public. Mayor Martin stated the conversation should always be comprehensive when educating the public on the talking points. Sarah Prohaska mentioned she is redesigning the Budget in Brief and could integrate some higher level talking points.

There being no further discussion, Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to

approve having the City Manager build a budget as recommended and presented by staff. Councilman Picket seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

(Clerk's Note: Mayor Martin called a break at 9:45 AM, and the meeting resumed 10:11 AM.)

- 5.b** Hear an Investment Review regarding the City's Investment Portfolio.

[2022-177](#)

At this point, Mayor Martin, in regard to educating the residents, commented on what the City can and cannot control.

Steve Okiye, Interim Finance Director, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the City's Investment Portfolio. He discussed the Investment Strategic Plan and stated it was about safety, liquidity, compliance, and then returns. He presented the market values and earnings as well as explained the risks and management of the City's portfolio. He concluded his presentation by reviewing the City's credit ratings and market sector percentages.

Mr. Okiye indicated the City was currently reviewing management options for their portfolio, whether to bring it in-house, have a third party, or have a hybrid effect. Mayor Martin inquired as to when that determination would be made, to which the City Manager stated it would be within the next 60 days. He said he predicted a hybrid scenario, where a firm or more than one firm would manage a portion of the City's portfolio to maximize interest earnings and monitor cash.

Councilwoman Caraballo stated that she sits on the Municipal Investment Trust Board and asked if the City ever considered them as an option. The City Manager indicated he has suggested to Mr. Okiye that he look at that Board as one of their options.

- 5.c** Provide Annual Review of the City's Debt Portfolio.

[2022-179](#)

Steve Okiye, Interim Finance Director, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the City's Debt Portfolio. He provided an update on the overall market, including unemployment rates, the CPI, and anticipated rate increases. He reviewed the City's debt policy as well as the major reasons for debt issuance, and showed the population growth of the City. He presented the City's bond ratings, two new bonds for utility systems and capital improvement, bond type by category and projected book value, and noted the reduction in the economic development category. He discussed year-over-year projected debt balance and

reduction, and the debt rolling forward or projected for FY 2022.

Vice Mayor Caraballo pointed out that the City is bound to their bond documents. Mr. Okiye explained the City cannot pay off some bonds until they are called, which is usually within a ten-year period. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated that this helps lower the interest rate and overall cash. She added the City has a debt allocation fund for additional debt repayment when those bonds become open.

Mayor Martin stated that reducing debt has been a priority for several years and will continue to be a priority. She noted that Torrey Pines will be paid off in 2027.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired about the City Center. The City Manager stated there will be no debt when the City takes over the City Center property. He explained the event center building includes the Mid-Florida Event Center and the recreation aspect, and there is still debt on that property. Vice Mayor Caraballo and the City Manger discussed how these properties might be classified in the future regarding debt.

Mayor Martin asked if the City was anticipating the County renewing the MSTU. The City Manager stated the County most likely would, but staff does not know the answer to that yet. He said they have assumed it will not be renewed and have increased debt service for the Event Center, because the City does not control it.

At this point, Mayor Martin requested that Joel Dramis, Building Code Administrator, speak on the Building Department.

Mr. Dramis presented a PP presentation on the Building Department's High Impact Plan. He noted the Building Department of Port St. Lucie was becoming a global influence by teaching and training other departments throughout the world on best practices to become accredited as well as working with the University of Central Florida to develop a program. He reviewed the department's priorities for the year, which include permitting, ordinances, fees, inspections, and outreach to contractors. He discussed upgrading Building B and other facilities as well as evaluating infrastructure for necessary repairs. He spoke to their high-performing activities through the use of timelines, maintaining accuracy, promoting customer service, and weekly staff meetings.

Mayor Martin inquired about the status of Oculus, to which Mr. Dramis stated he believed it was close to starting but would keep her posted.

Mr. Dramis explained how upgrading the technology allowed for virtual inspections and increased efficiency, especially during Covid, and how they were integrating Panda into Fusion.

Councilwoman Morgan and Mayor Martin indicated they were hearing that Fusion has a lot of issues and no one was happy with it. The City Manager explained they could not blame the software on issues where they need more people or a better process. Jesus Merejo, Chief Assistant City Manager, advised that they were adding staffing and flushing out the issues early on, but that it really comes down to the developer submitting the proper claims, so staff does not spend all their time processing them. Teresa Lamar-Sarno, Assistant City Manager, stated they had processed approximately 700 applications via Fusion last year and the data has been helpful in communicating with staff and the developers. Mayor Martin stated it was staff's job to make sure everything is done in the best interest of the City, as the developers and contractors will always be moving faster.

Vice Mayor Caraballo noted the feedback she has received from the development community is that after corrections were made, new corrections were being added by a different reviewer. Mr. Dramis responded and provided examples of different scenarios for addressing, processing changes or corrections, and submitting for permits.

Mr. Dramis stated their goal was to build a world-class department by assessing the current workload, updating/developing their succession plan, and updating their Standard Operating Procedures. He also reviewed his staffing needs and said he was asking for additional staffing while keeping in mind the positions that will be transitioned to electronic functions.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired how Mr. Dramis projected the number of staffing required and avoided the need to let employees go in the future if the market changes. Mr. Dramis explained how he constantly monitors the situation, workload, and employees and how he would address a decline or no growth.

Mayor Martin commented on how the Building Department of Port St. Lucie is always innovative and doing a great job.

At this time, Mayor Martin requested that Bill Jones in Information Technology provide a brief update on cyber and economic crime as well as the Wi-Fi Master Plan.

Mr. Jones, Chief Information Officer, discussed the Ukraine situation and stated that ransom spread in that region in the past, so the department is being diligent in everything they do. He indicated that more cyber expenses are in the budget for next year. He explained that IT does not put much information in their documents and speaks to Council one-on-one regarding any plans or concerns.

Regarding the Wi-Fi Master plan, Mr. Jones stated that eight parks and improving the Wi-Fi at the Event Center are scheduled for this year. He said the fiber projects funded by ARPA are being driven by the Wi-Fi plan, as they are targeting 28 parks throughout the City over the next three years.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired if the City could begin to collect information on those who utilize the Wi-Fi, so the City can better communicate what is happening in the City, i.e, displaying a pop-up with an offer to sign up to receive the City Manager's Biweekly Newsletter. Mr. Jones responded in the affirmative and explained it could be done like what they currently do for the Event Center. Councilman Bonna requested that the residents be granted access to the Wi-Fi, even if they do not sign up to receive information regarding the City.

Mr. Jones provided an update on the fiber optic cable that will connect with the County's Emergency Operations Center and stated the grant was extended until July. Mayor Martin commented on the added benefits of having the fiber optic cable in place.

Vice Mayor Caraballo requested a "State of the City" from IT, as far as true needs to accessing technology in the City from a citizen's perspective. She said Council has been asked to approve a cell tower, and she would like a summary of their needs before going into a meeting and making decisions. Mr. Jones stated they could look into that for Council.

Mr. Jones continued and provided a PowerPoint presentation on Information Technology's High Impact Plan. He reviewed the employee survey results, which indicated the IT Department is ranked above other cities nationwide for their service. He also reviewed and explained their staff projections for the next couple of years.

Councilwoman Morgan inquired if the City could be connected to or alert the County in emergency situations, instead of using Facebook. Chief Bolduc stated he believed certain criteria had to be met in order to do so. He explained there had to be a balance between overusing the alert system and reserving it for critical public safety issues. He said he would get more information for Council on the alert systems.

Councilman Pickett asked what the Wi-Fi equipment looked like and how it would be maintained. Mr. Jones explained the devices are the size of a pie plate with small antennas on them and are mounted on existing structures like a light pole. He noted the Wi-Fi equipment will not help with cell phone reception. He said the devices are managed through the cloud via a console, so they are alerted if anything goes offline. He stated if the fiber is cut, they have people who will go out and fix it.

The City Manager, Mayor Martin, and Council thanked everyone involved in preparing for and holding the Winter Retreat. Mayor Martin and Vice Mayor Caraballo expressed their appreciation for having such a great team.

6. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meet was adjourned at 12:04 PM.

Sally Walsh, City Clerk

Traci Mehl, Deputy City Clerk