

City of Port St. Lucie

Special City Council

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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Monday, July 24, 2023

9:30 AM

Council Chambers, City Hall

1. Meeting Called to Order

A Regular Meeting of the CITY COUNCIL of the City of Port St. Lucie was called to order by Mayor Martin on July 24, 2023, at 9:31 a.m., at Port St. Lucie City Hall, 121 SW Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, Florida.

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present:
Mayor Shannon Martin
Vice Mayor Jolien Caraballo
Councilwoman Stephanie Morgan
Councilman Dave Pickett
Councilman Anthony Bonna

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Martin led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public to be Heard

There was nothing to be heard under this item.

5. Special Presentations

5.a Presentation of Proposed Rate Increases for Fiscal 2023-24

[2023-622](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) OMB Director Caroline Sturgis introduced a presentation to the Council on increases to Special Assessments including Solid Waste, Stormwater, Water & Sewer, and Street Lighting, as well as setting the Public Hearing Dates. She discussed the budget revenue sources and provided

information for all funds, other revenue sources, and user fees. She then presented on economic considerations including population & business growth, inflation cooling, unemployment (as of May 2023), property values, and homesteaded property.

Ms. Sturgis discussed the proposed increases, stating that Solid Waste would have an increase of \$16.46 based on a 4% contractual inflation increase, which would also eliminate the one-time credit to homeowners. She stated that Stormwater would have a \$10.00 increase, Water & Sewer would have a 1.5% increase, and Street Lighting would have no change from the current year, remaining at \$26.00.

Solid Waste Director Mariana Feldpausch presented on the Solid Waste increase and provided a Solid Waste timeline to clarify the increase, starting with the creation of the Solid Waste Task Force in October 2021, to the new vendor FCC Environmental Services starting their services in September 2022. She then discussed the Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment for FY24, stating that it was 4%.

Public Works Director Heath Stocton presented on the Stormwater Fee increase, stating that the increase would cover the \$5.00 cost for this year, as well as the \$5.00 cost for last year. He explained that in FY23, they produced a one-time transfer to the Stormwater Fund from the General Fund to subsidize revenues in place of increasing the Stormwater Fee by \$5.00. He then discussed the 2021 Stormwater Rate Fee study, which recommended a \$5.00 minimum increase each year, as well as the future pursuance of grants for Capital Projects. He also noted that they would be hiring a Stormwater Project Manager and an outside consultant to evaluate the CDD rebates, and that the proposed increase would reduce the use of reserves for O&M and provide a \$1.2 million revenue increase. Mr. Stocton then presented on various completed and ongoing projects, as well as planned projects.

Utilities Director Kevin Matyjaszek presented on the Water & Sewer increase and provided data on the number of Utility Systems customers served and various water & sewer system statistics such as the amount of treatment plants, wells, and grinders. He discussed the monetary amounts of various projects and noted that they received a \$15 million grant for the Westport Wastewater Treatment Facility Project. He then provided a rate increase justification, stating that Raftelis Financial Consultants Inc. recommended a 1.5% annual increase.

Ms. Sturgis noted that the Streetlighting rate would remain the same.

Resident Indony Baptiste inquired on why a new contract was needed for the carts, and also inquired as to why two new Deputy City Attorneys were hired to represent the City in the Waste Pro case. City Attorney Stokes stated that the new attorneys were hired as co-counsel to handle the Waste Pro case so that they and their staff could supplement the City's in-house staff due to the amount of time and work the litigation would take. Deputy City Manager Teresa Lamar-Sarno addressed the cart inquiry, stating that they needed to make the cart bid very early for the community to be able to have the carts prior to obtaining the contractor, FCC. She stated that she could speak further with Mr. Baptiste on the topic. Vice Mayor Caraballo noted that the Cameo Site was not included in the contract and was funded by the General Fund, and City Attorney Stokes gave an update on the lawsuit, stating that the City had filed the suit first, then Waste Pro had filed a counterclaim, so the City would be filing a Motion for Summary Judgment.

There being no further discussion, Councilman Pickett moved to approve an increase to the Stormwater Fee by \$10.00. Councilwoman Morgan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to approve an increase to the Water & Sewer rates by 1.5%. Councilman Bonna seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Councilwoman Morgan moved to approve an increase to the Solid Waste Fee based on the removal of the one-time credit from last year and the 4% CPI increase, to \$432.67. Councilman Pickett seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to approve to keep the Streetlighting Fee the same. Councilwoman Morgan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

There being no further discussion, Councilwoman Morgan moved to set the public hearing dates for September 11, 2023, and September 25, 2023. Councilman Bonna seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

6. Unfinished Business

- 6.a** Utility Systems Department Presentation for the Septic to Sewer Conversion Program Update.

[2023-612](#)

(Clerk's Note: A PowerPoint presentation was shown at this time.) Donna Rhoden, Special Assistant to the City Manager and Utility Systems Department, presented to the Council on the conversion program by

discussing topics including private wells & septic systems still in use, the septic to sewer conversion process, septic to sewer conversion data & related environmental benefits, the Microbial Source Tracking Bacterial Pollution Hot Spot Grant Program, residential conversion costs, financial limitations related to the residential 10-year interest free program, what other agencies are doing with their programs, and the Hog Pen Hot Spot Grant Program.

Ms. Rhoden informed that the focus of the City's Septic to Sewer Conversion Program was to prevent septic effluent from leaching into local groundwater, the community's surface waters, and the North Fork of the St. Lucie River. Ms. Rhoden then showcased the field work that is done while converting and gave data for the environmental benefits of a sewer system including the prevention of nitrogen entering the lagoon. She also displayed a map that showed where the current septic systems were located.

Ms. Rhoden stated that \$100,000 was approved from the General Fund to promote septic conversions, which provided 32 grants per year. She then discussed the residential conversion fees, including fee amounts with participation in the grant program and the 10-Year Financing Program, noting that if it exceeded the \$14 million range, it would require larger rate increases and debt increases, among various other issues. Ms. Rhoden informed that some counties use various programs for grants such as S.H.I.P., CDBG, a County-run Utility CIP Program with Gravity mains, and administration by the Government Services Group (GSG).

Ms. Rhoden addressed if a Septic Conversion Savings Account could be developed, noting that if it was done from direct billing by Utilities, they would not have a way to bill 3,000+ customers because they were still served by private wells, and that owners would have to sign up and agree to pay bills. She then addressed if non Ad-Valorem Assessments could be added to tax bills, noting that all affected properties would need to be legally noticed with public hearings and an assessment would need to be provided to the County by September 15th of each year.

Ms. Rhoden then discussed the Hog Pen Hot Spot Grant, noting that Utilities had currently earmarked \$150,000 in its budget for the next 3 Fiscal Years, and that grants would be provided to residents on a first come first served basis. Vice Mayor Caraballo recommended looking into mandatory conversions upon redevelopment of Village Green.

Councilwoman Morgan inquired on if they could add to the discussion with the County regarding what they could offer to residents/businesses that

were utilizing City services and that were not on septic, to which Ms. Rhoden stated that the City often recommends to a resident to inquire with the County on forming a Municipal Services Benefit Unit, in which the County would hire an engineer and contractor, assess the property owners, and then turn the system over to the City to operate and maintain. City Manager Merejo advised that they could add this topic to the list for discussion.

A brief discussion was then held on the City Mandates and the length of time for use of these systems. Vice Mayor Caraballo recommended that the Council look into having a long-term mandate date, and also recommended that residents with wells also look into conversion.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Sally Walsh, City Clerk

Jasmin De Freese, Deputy City Clerk