

**FRUITLAND PARK CITY COMMISSION SPECIAL  
MEETING MINUTES  
December 17, 2020**

A special meeting of the Fruitland Park City Commission was held at 506 W. Berckman Street, Fruitland Park, Florida 34731 on Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mayor Chris Cheshire, Vice Mayor John L. Gunter, Jr., Commissioners Christopher Bell, Patrick DeGrave and John Mobilian.

**Also Present:** City Manager Gary La Venia; City Attorney Anita Geraci-Carver; City Treasurer Jeannine Racine; Police Chief Erik Luce, Sergeant Paul Sandbakken and Senior Police Officer Jeremiah Ricketts, Police Department; Interim Fire Chief Donald Gilpin and “Chris” Christopher Lewis, Fire Department; Deputy City Clerk Jabari Hopkins; City Clerk Esther B. Coulson.

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

After Mayor Cheshire called the meeting to order, Reverend Dr. Pastor George A. Mulford, Grace Bible Baptist Church, gave the invocation and Police Chief Erik Luce led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

ACTION: 6:00:05 p.m. No action was taken.

**2. ROLL CALL**

After Mayor Cheshire requested that Ms. Coulson call the roll where a quorum was declared present, he announced the decorum for this evening’s meeting.

ACTION: 6:02:20 p.m. No action was taken.

**3. RECESS TO THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

ACTION: 6:03:05 p.m. **By unanimous consent, the city commission recessed its meeting to the Community Redevelopment Agency at 6:03 p.m. and reconvened at 6:08 p.m.**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**By unanimous consent, Mayor Cheshire opened the public hearings at this evening’s meeting.**

**4. SPECIAL AGENDA**

**Second Reading and Public Hearing – Ordinance 2020-014 MSTU**

It now being the time advertised to hold a public hearing, Ms. Geraci-Carver read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance 2020-014, the substance of which is as follows and Mayor Cheshire called for interested parties to be heard:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF FRUITLAND PARK, FLORIDA, REQUESTING AND CONSENTING TO THE INCLUSION OF A PORTION OF THE INCORPORATED AREA OF THE CITY OF FRUITLAND PARK, KNOWN AS HISTORIC FRUITLAND PARK AND AS SET FORTH HEREIN, WITHIN THE 'LAKE COUNTY MUNICIPAL SERVICE TAXING UNIT FOR FIRE PROTECTION' IN ORDER FOR LAKE COUNTY TO PROVIDE FIRE RESCUE SERVICES AND IMPOSE A TAX FOR SAME; EXCLUDING THE VILLAGES OF FRUITLAND PARK FROM THE MSTU; REQUESTING AND CONSENTING TO IMPOSITION AND COLLECTION OF FIRE RESCUE ASSESSMENTS FOR FIRE RESCUE SERVICES BY LAKE COUNTY WITHIN SAID AREA; PROVIDING FOR ANNUAL RENEWAL OF EACH SUCH REQUEST AND CONSENT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE. (The first reading was held on December 10, 2020.)

**ACTION:** 6:08:04 p.m. **A motion was made by Vice Mayor Gunter and seconded by Commissioner Bell that the city commission enact Ordinance 2020-014, as previously cited, to become effective immediately, as provided by law.**

The following City of Fruitland Park residents appeared citing reasons in opposition of the subject proposed ordinance:

Mses. Amber Lewis -- who gave an account of the implications of the fire assessment and additional MSTU fees affecting the historic Fruitland Park property owners and faith-based organizations and questioned the opportunity to apply for grants for the fire department;

Anita Fechceo; Messrs. Ray Lewis, former city commissioner, Jeff Brian, Vito Simone, business owner; and Carlisle Burch, and

Pastor Mulford, who voiced concerns on the cost to faith-based organizations and the residents; recognized -- as the fire department's chaplain -- the fire department staff's performance and addressed his belief on the loss of control of fire protection and rescue services by the city where he requested that the city commission reconsider.

Earlier in the meeting, Mr. William Bear referred to a November 2020 incident on the intersection of Palm Street and Magnolia Avenue where the fire hydrant close-by was obliterated. He voiced concerns on the lack of same which used to serve the surrounding area; thus, the longtime visible puddle on the roadway (an unforeseen danger to the pedestrians) with the nearby property owner's efforts to remediate.

After Mayor Cheshire recommended that Mr. Bear meet with Mr. La Venia, who addressed his intent to convey the issue to Public Works Director Robb Dicus, Interim Fire Chief recalled the determination made for the fire hydrant replacement to be made by the county who is dealing with the potential relocation.

**By unanimous consent, Mayor Cheshire closed the public hearing.**

**Mayor Cheshire called for a roll call vote on the motion and declared it carried unanimously.**

### END OF PUBLIC HEARING

#### 5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no further business to come before the city commission at this time.

ACTION: 6:32:40 p.m. No action was taken.

#### 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

With the exception of one city commission member and another that was absent, Mr. Ray Lewis voiced concerns on the lack of visible acknowledgement when Mr. Christopher Lewis, former Fruitland Park Firefighter and city resident, appeared before the city commission at its December 10, 2020 regular meeting; recalled, as a previous member of the then Charter Review Committee its April 8, 2014 discussions on subsection 3.03., Election and Terms, and pointed out the number of supporters who signed the petition *Keep Fruitland Park Fire Rescue* initiated by Ms. Lewis.

ACTION: 6:32:42 p.m. No action was taken.

#### 7. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

##### (a) Commissioner Mobilian

Commissioner Mobilian stated that he has nothing to report at this time.

ACTION: 6:36.09 p.m. No action was taken.

##### (b) Commissioner DeGrave

Commissioner DeGrave that he has nothing to report at this time.

ACTION: 6:36:12 p.m. No action was taken.

##### (c) Commissioner Bell – Fruitland Park Fire Department

Commissioner Bell addressed the process undertaken and the gains made when arriving at the decision for the fire department; addressed his availability inviting anyone to reach out to him in that regard and recognized the appointment Mayor Cheshire has with Ms. Lewis on December 18, 2020 regarding the subject issue.

ACTION: 6:036.14 p.m. No action was taken.

**(d) Vice Mayor Gunter, Jr. – Fruitland Park Fire Department**

Vice Mayor Gunter pointed out the few neighbors he recently spoke with regarding the city's enhancement of the fire department; indicated that he has not received any calls from concerned residents and gave his reassurance on the city's decision that the department is not being eliminated.

Vice Mayor Gunter gave comparisons of other local governments' fire assessments and the request for him to review the City of Inverness' fire department, fire assessment, budget and millage rate. He recalled his previous discussion envisioning the fire department becoming fulltime and how it would be accomplished.

ACTION: 6:38:10 p.m. No action was taken.

**8. MAYOR'S COMMENTS**

**(a) Fruitland Park Fire Department**

Mayor Cheshire recalled the previous position he took and cited various reasons why he decided to retain a new full-time professional fire chief to manage the fire department which was addressed at the August 3, 2020 workshop.

After discussion, Mayor Cheshire reiterated his earlier statements that the fire department will remain in the city; however, its services will be managed by the county. He mentioned the plan to meet with Ms. Lewis on December 18, 2020 to address any questions that is expected to arise.

ACTION: 6:42:21 p.m. No action was taken.

**(b) Dates to Remember**

Mayor Cheshire announced the following dates:

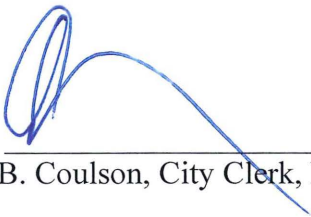
- December 24, 2020, City Commission Regular at 6:00 p.m. – Cancelled;
- December 24, 2020, Christmas Eve – City Hall Closed;
- December 25, 2020, Christmas Day - City Hall Closed;
  
- January 1, 2021, New Year's Day – City Hall Closed;
- January 14, 2021, City Commission Regular at 6:00 p.m.;
- January 18, 2021, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Day– City Hall Closed, and
- January 28, 2021, City Commission Regular at 6:00 p.m.

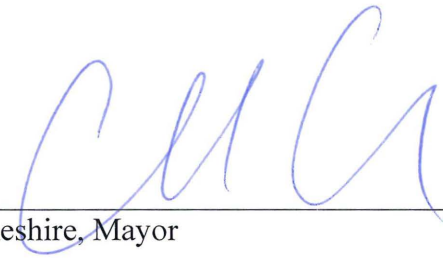
ACTION: 6:45:56 p.m. No action was taken.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

**There being no further business to come before the city commission, the meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.**

The minutes were approved at the January 28, 2021 regular meeting.

Signed   
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Esther B. Coulson, City Clerk, MMC

Signed   
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Chris Cheshire, Mayor