

**FRUITLAND PARK CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP  
MEETING MINUTES  
July 31, 2023**

A workshop meeting of the Fruitland Park City Commission was held at 506 W. Berckman Street, Fruitland Park, Florida 34731 on Monday, July 31, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

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

**Also Present:** City Manager Gary La Venia; City Treasurers Gary Bauchman and Jeannine Racine; City Attorney Anita Geraci-Carver; Police Chief Erik Luce; Sergeant David Cox, Police Department; Public Works Director Robb Dicus; Parks and Recreation Director Michelle Yoder; Library Director JoAnn Glendinning; Human Resources Director Betty McHale; Community Development Department, Interim Community Development Director Michael “Mike” Rankin, LPG Urban Regional Planners Inc. (consultant retained by the city) and Keli Feilder, Community Development Department; and City Clerk Esther B. Coulson.

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

After Mayor Cheshire called the meeting to order, Chief Luce led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Mayor Cheshire requested that Ms. Coulson call the roll and a quorum was present.

**By unanimous consent, the city commission accepted Mayor Cheshire’s suggestion on the order of business for this evening’s agenda.**

Ms. McHale gave a power-point presentation on human resources workforce statistics; market results; salaries and paid time off, with recommendations and distributed proposed pay quartiles and Appendix C, Accumulation of Annual (Vacation Leave) -- derived from Ordinance 92-018. (Copies of the respective documents are filed with the supplemental papers to the minutes of this meeting.)

Following Ms. McHale’s request for assistance on the personnel policies and procedures manual and for Ms. Dorothy “Dottie” F. Green, Latham, Luna, Eden & Beaudine LLP (labor and employment law attorney retained by the city), to provide feedback on what she finalized at the end of December 2022, Mr. La Venia addressed his plan to contact Ms. Green again after sending his recent email to her in that regard.

Ms. McHale pointed out, in response to Mayor Cheshire’s inquiry, the first paid-time off (PTO) to cover the sick leave policy earmarked in the proposed balanced budget.

Vice Mayor DeGrave referred to his recent meeting with staff; relayed his suggestion to set aside, as a buyback, benefits or central contingency line-item for review together with the city’s manual at the August 24, 2023 workshop to be scheduled at the conclusion of the

regular city commission meeting to which Mr. La Venia interjected his plan to retire by the end of September 2024.

**By unanimous consent, the city commission directed the city manager to seek out consulting firms to commence the recruitment process for the position of the city manager and agreed to hold a workshop session on the personnel policies and procedures manual, after the labor attorney's review, upon the conclusion of its August 24, 2023 regular meeting.**

Later in the meeting, and after considerable discussion, **in preparation of the city manager's impending retirement, the city commission, upon Vice Mayor DeGrave recommendation, agreed to include in the FY 2023-24 budget up to \$70,000 funds set aside for the hiring of a southern national search firm, double-pay and vacation time with shadowing, and benefits payout and relocating expenses.**

**The city commission, by unanimous consent, additionally agreed with the city attorney's plan to review and provide guidance on the paid time off policy to the human resources director for discussion at the August 24, 2023 workshop.**

### **3. FY 2023-24 PROPOSED BUDGET**

Mr. Bachmann gave a power-point presentation on the FY 2023-24 proposed budget as follows:

#### **- General Fund Revenues**

After Vice Mayor DeGrave referred to the percentage of total budget column reflected on the far right, Mr. Bachmann explained the difference between FY 2022-23 revised budget and the FY 2023-24 proposed budget and suggested that the city commission disregard same due to the defect and problems experienced with the Tyler Technologies Inc.'s MUNIS® computer software.

Following much discussion, Mr. La Venia addressed the plan to transition to a BS&A Cloud Software® for \$33,000, over a three-year period, to be included in the proposed budget and subsequently in the forthcoming budgets until FY 2025-26 and to communicate with the community development department on amalgamating its current TRAKiT Software by Superion (Solutions) LLC into same.

Upon Mayor Cheshire's suggestion, and **by unanimous consent, the city commission directed staff to submit a budget amendment for FY 2022-23 and consider the approval of a contract with BS&A Cloud Software®, as previously cited, for consideration at a forthcoming meeting.**

#### **- Executive**

After Vice Mayor DeGrave referred to page 21, regarding records management for \$45,000, Ms. Coulson referred to her email of today's date outlining the status, the ongoing projects relative to same and recommendations for the city commission's

consideration at a future meeting; a copy of which is filed with the supplemental papers to the minutes of this meeting.

- **Legal**

Subsequent to further discussion, and **by unanimous consent, the city commission agreed with the city manager's recommendation, acceptable by the city attorney, to seek existing attorneys or firms with legal expertise in labor counsel and provide a report to the city commission (preferably after reviewing the personnel policies and procedures manual).**

- **Other General Government**

Mr. La Venia addressed the opportunity, annually, to earmark initially \$55,000 for city hall improvements in the following order (1), utility section (finance department); (2), ceiling insulation, and (3), commission chambers dais upgrades.

After Mr. La Venia addressed the annual leasing of a 22-foot Christmas tree to be placed in front of city hall for \$15,000 which includes the repairing, dismantling, installation and storing as opposed to the one-time \$45,000 to purchase same, **by unanimous consent, and upon Commissioner Gunter's suggestion, the city commission agreed to remove the Christmas tree line item for \$15,000 from the FY 2023-24 budget and utilize commercial grade products for decorations.**

**By unanimous consent, and upon Vice Mayor DeGrave's recommendation, the city commission agreed to transfer the implementation of Tyler forms module for general billing, payroll, financial and business licenses for \$13,360 to BS&A Cloud Software®.** (The city treasurer recognized that the Munis modules not being used will be taken from the \$34,310; addressed the intent to recommend a budget amendment for FY 2022-23 to initiate the BS&A Cloud Software and propose a second payment for \$34,310 for FY 2023-24.)

(Commissioner Mobilian left the meeting room at this time.)

- **Law Enforcement** – in confirming that two vehicles will be purchased which is included in the FY 2023-24 proposed budget, Chief Luce compared this date at 3:00 p.m., the increase in the number of varied service calls received for 2023 to be 13,749 with the same date and time in 2022 at 8,992.
- **Solid Waste** – After Vice Mayor DeGrave referred to the solid waste operating expenses for recycle, **by unanimous consent, the city commission agreed with the city manager's recommendation to remove the word "recycle" as it is classified as regular bulk waste pickup.**

- **Library** – Ms. Glendinning recognized \$6,000 allocation to replace the peg boards on both sides as the electronic signs have started to burn out; addressed her plan, in response to several questions posed, for the \$2,900 to be placed in the children’s room and to keep it to expand the teen room, and agreed in the affirmative to identify the \$6,000 to buy the shelving.

Ms. Glendinning featured the proposed directional signs to the library, city hall and police/fire departments to be restored back on Fountain Street and Rose Avenue and accepted the compliments relayed for the café and children’s programs as well as highlighted the past and plans for future events. She gave a statistical report on the café’s number of visits, sales, expenditures and profits. (Copies of the respective documents are filed with the supplemental papers to the minutes of this meeting.)

Later in the meeting, and **by unanimous consent, the city commission agreed to include in the FY 2023-24 proposed budget funds earmarked towards the display advertising lighting outside the library.**

- **Swimming Pool**

Ms. Yoder addressed the problems with and explained the need to repair and replace the original swimming pool filters \$10,000 of which has been included in the budget for the last three years.

In response to Mayor Cheshire’s question regarding the continuing swim team practices (Leesburg Aquatics Club) and after Mr. La Venia acknowledged the retention of a full-time pool manager (who can train lifeguards and teach water safety instructors to be certified), Ms. Yoder addressed the plan (with the adequate number of lifeguards and after Lake County Public Schools commence on August 10, 2023) to allow the swimming pool to remain operational over the weekends with swim lessons from morning to evening.

Ms. Kerrie B. Johnson, City of Fruitland Park resident; gave reasons why she supports continuing in the swim fit (water aerobics) program which was not utilized during this summer; noted the benefits to the community, and addressed the ability to participate after-hours to which Ms. Yoder mentioned her efforts in seeking employees and the need for a regular staff person or subcontractor who is certified and insured.

Ms. Coulson confirmed in the affirmative to an inquiry posed by Unincorporated Lady Lake Area Resident Ms. Liz Davis on her availability and willingness to continue to teach the swim fit classes (recognizing the conflicts with her work schedule) as a certified, insured and subcontractor instructor.

Ms. Margaret “Peggy” Joseph, Town of Lady Lake resident, who expressed concerns on her June 15 web form submission through the city’s website and her June 20, 2023 emails to individual city commissioners regarding her satisfaction with the equipment used in the pool and the classes taught. She referred to her inquiry with Infinity Fitness and Spa Inc. (who has an agreement with the city for the use of city swimming pool for

exercise classes) where they assured her and other individuals on the availability of classes that would be taught and the ability for her to join.

Ms. Connie Ashley, Lady Lake Unincorporated Area resident, representing the seniors and individuals on a fixed budget who cannot participate in the gym, voiced her positive experience gained from taking water swim fit classes a year ago; recognized the activities with the Warren Wallis United Methodist Camp to learn safety, and complimented the programs offered at the pool; thus, requested support from a community standpoint.

- **Parks and Recreation Maintenance**

Ms. Yoder explained, in response to Mr. La Venia's reference to the restructuring of staff, the combination of recreation (parks and recreation maintenance) rather than sharing with the public works staff.

After discussion and in response to Vice Mayor DeGrave's reference to the cemetery costs of \$9,000 and whether it ought to be an enterprise fund, he pointed out page 89 under personal services showing electric *Shiloh field, cemetery*.

**By unanimous consent, and upon Vice Mayor DeGrave's suggestion, the city manager agreed to include a road fund revenue line item in the budget for cemetery costs.**

After Mayor Cheshire questioned applying for grants for the skate park and his concerns regarding the current condition of Olive Park, Ms. Yoder addressed the inability to obtain Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) grant funding and the lack of response after reaching out to the grant writer to which Mr. La Venia mentioned his plan to communicate with Ms. Melissa N. Fox (Fred Fox Enterprises Grants Compliance Manager previously retained by the city).

Following some discussion and in responding to Commissioner Gunter's previous requests over the years for a splash park, Mr. La Venia agreed to identify a location in Gardenia Park to apply for a \$500,000 matching grant award from the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) towards same.

Later in the meeting, Ms. Geraci-Carver, in response to Commissioner Gunter's inquiry confirmed that CRA funds can be used to fund the splash pad as a new project.

- **Recreation**

In response to Mr. Bachmann's review of the soccer field grant and the likelihood for a budget amendment, Mr. La Venia anticipated receiving an interlocal agreement from Lake County for \$150,000 for FY 2022-23; installing, over a two or five-year period, replacement lights at Cales Memorial Athletic Complex, and proposing a question to Ms. Fox as to whether FRDAP grants can be applied in that regard.

Answering questions posed by Mr. La Venia, Ms. Yoder confirmed that the double-sided video electronic display sign at the community center needs replacement where at the library the costs have been earmarked for \$30,000 with funds coming from the CRA.

- **General Funds Transfer**

Mr. Bachmann referred to the general fund expenses graph for utilities which is incorrect; confirmed that a \$100,000 transfer was for paving and in answer to a question posed by Vice Mayor DeGrave, the \$83,008 is removed which came out of the utility revenue.

- **FY 2023-24 CRA Budget**

Mr. La Venia identified the areas not included in the CRA; namely, Wingspread, Myrtle Lake Breezes, The Glen Subdivisions and The Villages of Fruitland Park (Pine Hills and Pine Ridge); referred to approximately \$1.5 million reserved for the CRA, noting the budgeted projects for CR 466A Phase 3B, and referred to the recent costs of \$1.1 million for same where Mr. Dicus is anticipating receiving utility adjustment plans for said roadway for review.

After Mr. La Venia addressed utilizing CRA funding for the project from the reserve - taking another \$650,000 for CR 466A and when receiving the water impact fees, earmarking \$3,500 for wastewater and the remaining \$1 million for water -- relayed Vice Mayor DeGrave's suggestion to loan the city funds from CRA and upon receiving the water impact fees, pay the city back from the CRA money with enough funds remaining from the CRA, He addressed the need to demolish the current public works building to construct a parking lot and bid on the foreclosed property located on 105 West Berckman Street when the time comes.

Following further discussion and at **Vice Mayor DeGrave's request, the city commission agreed for the city attorney and city manager to review the funds for CR 466A Phase B and report back to the city commission.**

- **Utility Revenues**

Mayor Cheshire and Vice Mayor DeGrave recalled the city commission's previous action to review mid-FY 2022-23 to reduce the water usage rate of 7.5% to three and a half percent (3.5%) for 2022; review mid-FY 2022-23 the electric tax fund received, and identify how the rate could be lowered to a reduced revenue source.

- **Water Department**

Mr. La Venia indicated that funds have been earmarked in the budget for water meters to which Mr. Dicus gave reasons why he plans to place orders on October 1, 2023 as it is earmarked in the FY 2022-23 budget with availability of same expected within six to 12 months.

After discussion, Vice Mayor DeGrave recalled the city commission's awarding of the flow test fire hydrant inspection quote to Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers for \$13,750

(at its July 14, 2022 meeting) to which Mr. Dicus confirmed that same is in the budget; addressed the inability to clean and repaint 286 fire hydrants due to staff shortage and mentioned his efforts, with no response, in soliciting a painting company to perform same.

Mr. Dicus responded to a question posed by Vice Mayor DeGrave that there are no plans to restripe The Villages and mentioned his intent to purchase a paint sprayer equipment, for stop bars within the city.

Mr. La Venia reported on the current million-dollar grant for a 16' line along US Highway 27/441 corridor to serve a portion of the proposed commercial and residential development; addressed the plan to review water impact fees of approximately \$900,000 and mentioned his intent to appear before the Lake County Board of County Commissioners at its August 29, 2023 regular meeting. He recognized the current invitation to bids 2023-02 (Patricia Avenue) and 2023-03 (Spring Lake Road) respectively for water mains and services with the anticipation of applying for community development block grants once the bids are procured.

**4. OTHER BUSINESS**

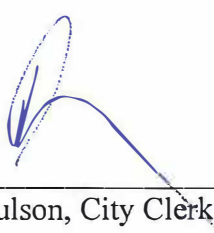
Earlier in the meeting and after Commissioner Bell referred to his previous discussions regarding Mirror Lake Village (Apartments sewer) and Urick Street wastewater package plan, Mr. Dicus pointed out his recent communication on the \$80,000 impact fee where he is waiting for their decision.

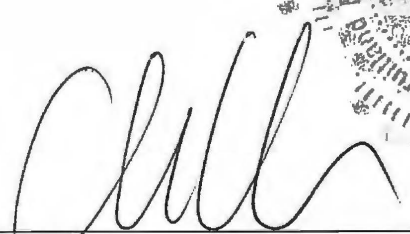
**By unanimous consent, the city commission determined not to meet on August 1, 2023 for the FY 2023-24 budget workshop.**

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.**

The minutes were approved at the August 24, 2023 regular meeting.

Signed   
Esther B. Coulson, City Clerk, MMC

Signed   
Chris Cheshire, Mayor

