



**MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
of THE MARY ESTHER CITY COUNCIL
December 5, 2023 - 6:00 PM**

195 Christobal Road – North, Mary Esther, FL 32569

CITY COUNCIL PRESENT

Chris Stein, Mayor
Susan Coxwell, Councilmember
Jan Lipscomb, Councilmember

Larry Carter, Mayor Pro Tem
April Sutton, Councilmember
Bernie Oder, Councilmember

CITY STAFF PRESENT

Jared Cobb, City Manager
Hayward Dykes, City Attorney
Shawn Lindsey, Public Works Director

Dillon Morris, Interim City Clerk
Kelvin Cherry, Code Compliance Officer
Heather Day, Finance Director

OTHERS PRESENT

Grady Carpenter, OSCO Captain

Jeff Wagner, OCWFD Deputy Chief

1. INVOCATION

Deputy Chief Jeff Wagner, Ocean City Wright Fire Control District, provided the invocation.

2. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Stein at 6:00 p.m.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Stein led the pledge of allegiance.

4. ROLL CALL

Interim City Clerk Morris called the roll as reflected above.

5. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Stein asked if the Council wished to make any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, Mayor Stein asked for a motion. Councilmember Coxwell initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Lipscomb. The motion passed 4 to 0.

RESULT:	PASSED (4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
SECOND:	Councilmember Janice Lipscomb
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

6. OLD BUSINESS

6.1. Lease or Acquisition of Property Located at 302 Mary Esther Boulevard

Council asked if the city manager had any opening comments and the city manager said he only had one change: the square footage of the original city hall was slightly smaller than listed in the original staff report. Mayor Stein mentioned there were several possible motions: purchase, lease, or lease to own.

Mayor Stein called for a motion to submit a formal offer with the purchase price, and terms agreed to in the letter of intent. A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Oder.

The Council discussed the timing of buying the property, the state of the current city hall building, and possible ways to help finance the purchase of the property. City Manager Cobb stated that presently, the City could, but in the event of a recession, it may need to reduce operating expenses or use unassigned reserves. Council discussed the possibility of pushing the decision to January when the full Council is present, as well as if the purchase of the property would affect any of the other ongoing projects.

Council discussed the idea of leasing the property or leasing-to-own and asked City Manager Cobb if the public had given any feedback about the potential purchase. City Manager Cobb stated that the public had not given much feedback and reception was neutral. City Manager Cobb then mentioned the possible new amenities the property could provide. Council suggested that city hall was for the public, and employees, mentioning topics of ADA compliance, security, and staff spacing issues.

Council discussed the potential effects and issues of building a new city hall versus buying the property. Council asked City Manager Cobb if there was enough time to purchase the property. He stated they may need to ask for additional time and the city would put down earnest money that could be refunded during the due diligence period.

The Council called for a vote with the motion mentioned above. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	PASSED (4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember April Sutton
SECOND:	Councilmember Bernie Oder
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1. Off Base Military Housing

City Manager Cobb stated that the city was approached about building off-base military housing in Mary Esther and mentioned that if this was something they would like to do, he would need to get in contact with Eglin and Hurlburt. The agenda item was included to provide information and request direction on whether the Council would like to pursue the concept.

Brenner Campbell, shared about his past experiences in the military and his career. He discussed that Cannon Air Force Base approached him about having an issue with housing and dorms and suggested a similar Intergovernmental Support Agreement between the military installation and the city of Mary Esther. Council inquired about if he already had projects in the area, to which he mentioned he did not. Council also inquired about where the housing would be built, to which Campbell said that it would go out to bid and be in the city limits of Mary Esther. Council asked about contingency plans if the base no longer needed the housing. Campbell mentioned the building could be used for additional rental housing. He also discussed the potential economic benefits of the housing, mentioning the effects they have already had in their Clovis, New Mexico, project. Campbell also discussed the increased work and jobs that would be generated during and after construction.

Council inquired about the appearance of the buildings, to which Campbell mentioned that the buildings are made of brick, solar panels are on the roof, stainless steel appliances, laundry units in the dwelling, and 9 foot raised ceilings. He mentioned his plans for the buildings was to increase retention in the military by providing high quality housing. Council asked how many acres would be required for the building plans. Campbell mentioned he would need 4 acres but that he had already discussed with current land owners in the area about the possibility of purchasing their land.

Council asked City Manager Cobb, as he had discussed in a meeting about this topic previously, if Eglin and Hurlburt seemed interested. City Manager Cobb mentioned that they seemed interested and that, if desired by Council, he would send a formal letter asking the base if they were interested in the concept. City Manager Cobb mentioned if Hurlburt showed an interest, there would be more legal documents involved in the project.

Council discussed the possibility of City Manager Cobb reaching out to the city manager of Clovis, New Mexico, to gather more information about the housing project currently there. He mentioned that he could and had met the city manager there before.

Mayor Stein asked for a motion to direct the City Manager to send a formal letter to Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field. A motion was made by Councilmember Oder, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. Motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	(4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember Bernie Oder
SECOND:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

7.2. Wastewater Treatment Plant Generator Procurement

Shawn Lindsey, the Public Works Director, mentioned that, in accordance with their FDEP consent order, the city is replacing a generator as an in-kind penalty project in lieu of paying a penalty to FDEP. Council asked if a generator was available. Public Works Director Lindsey stated a generator was available. Staff was requesting approval to purchase through a cooperative purchasing agreement. The actual purchase would have additional costs, such as a fuel tank. City Manager Cobb added that this option would expedite the purchase of the generator.

Mayor Stein for a motion to approve the purchase of an emergency backup generator for the sewer plant through a state contract or cooperative purchasing agreement for an amount not to exceed \$160,000. A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Lipscomb. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	(4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember April Sutton
SECOND:	Councilmember Janice Lipscomb
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

7.3. Amended Consent Order Penalty Project

Public Works Director Lindsey, mentioned that, per the amended FDEP consent order, the City was required to pay a penalty fee or complete another in-kind project. He requested approval for an in-kind project to install manhole covers. Public Works Director Lindsey mentioned he discussed the project with FDEP. While more expensive than the penalty fee, the project would help protect the sewer system from future overflows.

Mayor Stein called for a motion to submit an in-kind penalty project to FDEP for the purchase and installation of inflow protectors. A motion was made by Councilmember Oder, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	(0-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember Bernie Oder
SECOND:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
AYES:	None
NAYS:	None

7.4. City Clerk Recruitment Process

City Manager Cobb stated that staff was looking for direction on filling the city clerk position, remarking that there were three topics that should be resolved.

Council remarked that the first item was hiring an interim city clerk. City Manager Cobb stated that existing staff could help with the duties of the position until filled; the previous city clerk trained the Administrative Coordinator, Dillon Morris, on the core duties of the position. Alternatively, the council could hire a contract interim city clerk.

The Council asked Dillon Morris if he felt comfortable with the interim duties. He stated that he was comfortable and had already been doing some of the work.

Mayor Stein asked for a motion to appoint Dillon Morris as the Interim City Clerk. A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Lipscomb. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	PASSED (4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember April Sutton
SECOND:	Councilmember Janice Lipscomb
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

Council then discussed the current job description as presented by City Manager Cobb. City Manager Cobb asked for feedback on the job description as provided. Council discussed the city clerk in reporting to the city manager. Council asked if the city manager would accept the responsibility. City Manager Cobb remarked that whatever Council decides he would work with, whether it reports directly to him or to Council. Council also discussed that they do not see the city clerk in their day-to-day, citing that the city manager does and should report to him. The Council stated they would still be a part of the process of hiring, firing, and evaluations and requested the change to be included in the job description to make it clear. Council asked Attorney Dykes if any other cities had a similar situation with their clerks as well as evaluations.

Mayor Stein called for a motion to approve the job description with the following changes: he or she reports to the city manager as a department head, with evaluations completed by city manager and approved by council, and city council retain the right to hire and fire the person as per charter. A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	(4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember April Sutton
SECOND:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

City Manager Cobb then asked how the council would like to conduct the recruitment process. Staff could conduct the recruitment in-house, or the Council could hire an executive search firm. Attorney Dykes stated that if the city receives applications and staff culls them to solicit a certain number for council, the process must be done in an advertised public meeting. The exception was fact finding where the applications are culled to meet criteria, but even those applications would need to be submitted to Council for review and consideration.

Mayor Stein called for a motion to direct the City Manager to conduct the recruitment process. A motion was made by Councilmember Oder, seconded by Councilmember Sutton. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	(4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember Bernie Oder
SECOND:	Councilmember April Sutton
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

7.5. Facilitator for FY 2024 City Manager Evaluation

City Manager Cobb stated that the current evaluator, Dr. Walt Hanline, for the city manager is shifting to more part time and wants to schedule his work for the next year. His proposal was provided for review. Council discussed if they would like to proceed with Dr. Hanline for the annual city manager evaluation.

Mayor Stein called for a motion to select Dr. Walt Hanline and the National Center for Executive Leadership and School Board Development to facilitate the FY 2024 Annual Evaluation of the City Manager for an amount not-to-exceed \$4,000. A motion was made by Councilmember Lipscomb, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	PASSED (4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember Janice Lipscomb
SECOND:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

7.6. Cancellation of Regular December City Council Meeting

City Manager Cobb stated that the main items for the regular December council meeting had been covered in this meeting and that the only additional items were the monthly reports. Cancellation of the meeting required a formal vote. The Council stated that some minor presentations would be delayed to January. City Manager Cobb stated that monthly reports would still be sent to Council with approval at the January meeting.

Mayor Stein called for a motion to cancel the Regular City Council meeting scheduled for December 12, 2023. A motion was made by Councilmember Lipscomb, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed 4-0.

RESULT:	PASSED (4-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember Janice Lipscomb
SECOND:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
AYES:	Susan Coxwell, Bernie Oder, Janice Lipscomb, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

8. ADJOURN

Mayor Stein asked if there were any additional comments from the Council.

Councilmember Sutton thanked the city and the workers for the tree lighting event the city conducted, remarking that despite rain the event was a success.

Councilmember Coxwell had no additional comments.

Mayor Stein asked about the status of the Springdale sidewalk and Jacobs work on the pipes. City Manager Cobb remarked that the city is still negotiating with Talcon.

Councilmember Lipscomb asked about a trench on a city street causing cracks, and inquired about the status. City Manager Cobb stated he would check on the progress and get back to her.

Councilmember Oder had no additional comments.

Attorney Dykes stated that he would be attending the city Christmas party.

Interim City Clerk Morris had no additional comments.

City Manager Cobb had no additional comments.

The Council meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.


Interim City Clerk Dillon Morris



Minutes Approved on 1/16/24