MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
of THE MARY ESTHER CITY COUNCIL
February 3, 2025 - 6:00 PM
195 Christobal Road – North, Mary Esther, FL 32569

CITY COUNCIL PRESENT
Chris Stein, Mayor
Bernie Oder, Councilmember
Susan Coxwell, Councilmember
April Sutton, Mayor Pro Tem, Virtual
Larry Carter, Councilmember, Virtual
Richard Lawson, Councilmember

CITY STAFF PRESENT
Jared Cobb, City Manager
Hayward Dykes, City Attorney
Dillon Morris, City Clerk
Kelvin Cherry, Code Compliance Officer
Heather Day, Finance Director
Shawn Lindsey, Public Works Director
Tyler Reed, Community Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT
Chad Rewis, OSCO Captain
Jeff Wagner, OCWFD Chief

1. **INVOCATION**
Jeff Wagner, Fire Chief, Ocean City-Wright Fire Control District, gave the invocation.

2. **CALL TO ORDER**
Mayor Stein called the meeting to order at 6:22 p.m. Due to technical difficulties, it started later than the scheduled time.

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
Mayor Stein led the pledge of allegiance.

4. **ROLL CALL**
The City Clerk called the roll as reflected above. Mayor Pro Tem Sutton and Councilmember Carter joined the meeting virtually. Mayor Stein asked for a motion for Mayor Pro Tem Sutton and Councilmember Carter to participate virtually. Councilmember Coxwell initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Lawson. The motion passed 3-0.

RESULT:	**PASSED (3-0)**
MOVER:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
SECOND:	Councilmember Richard Lawson
AYES:	Bernie Oder, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
NAYS:	None

5. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**
Mayor Stein asked if the council wished to change the agenda. Hearing none, Mayor Stein asked for a motion. Councilmember Coxwell initiated the motion, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Sutton. The motion passed 5-0.

RESULT:	**PASSED (5-0)**
MOVER:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
SECOND:	Mayor Pro Tem April Sutton
AYES:	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell

NAYS:	None

6. **SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**
None.

7. **CONSENT AGENDA**
Mayor Stein asked if the council wished to change the consent agenda. Hearing none, Mayor Stein asked for a motion. Mayor Pro Tem Sutton initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed 5-0.

RESULT:	**PASSED (5-0)**
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem April Sutton
SECOND:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
AYES:	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
NAYS:	None

7.1. **Financial Report**

7.2. **Public Works Report**

7.3. **Library Report**

7.4. **Fire Department Report**

7.5. **Community Development Report**

7.6. **Jacobs Report**

7.7. **Law Enforcement Report**

7.8. **Minutes of the December 9th, 2024, Local Planning Agency Meeting**

7.9. **Minutes of the December 9th, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting**

7.10. **Minutes of the December 11th, 2024, City Council Workshop**

8. **CITIZENS WHO HAVE REQUESTED TO BE PLACED ON THE AGENDA**
None.

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)**
Claude Thomas, 9 Magnolia Dr, inquired about when the state will finish paving 98 in the housing developments. Mayor Pro Tem Sutton remarked that FDOT is working on it, but they are waiting on some assessors. Public Works Director Lindsey stated that, after his discussion, completion had been postponed to June.

Wiebke Anderson, 2 Azalea Dr, inquired about the FL State Homeless legislation passed and voiced concern about wanting to address the homeless problem respectfully and not just making it about getting them out of town.

10. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
None.

11. **NEW BUSINESS**

11.1. **Resolution 25-01, Supporting the 2025 Florida League of Cities (FLC) Legislative Platform**
Mayor Stein asked for the city clerk to read Resolution 25-01. City Clerk Morris read the title of Resolution 25-01. Mayor Stein asked if there was any discussion. City Manager Cobb discussed the FLC priorities for the Florida legislature. Hearing no more discussion, Mayor Stein requested a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Coxwell initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Carter. The motion passed 5-0.

RESULT:	**PASSED (5-0)**
MOVER:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
SECOND:	Councilmember Richard Lawson
AYES:	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
NAYS:	None

11.2. Award of RFP 2024-09, Operations, Maintenance and Management of Water and Wastewater Distribution, Collection and Treatment System

Public Works Director Lindsey introduced the topic and discussed the O&M of the Water and Wastewater Systems request for proposals. He discussed the proposals received and how the scoring committee got their scores. He discussed that after everything, the city recommends entering into negotiations with Inframark. Mayor Stein opened the discussion by letting each councilmember share their thoughts.

Councilmember Oder discussed reviewing the proposals and doing some individual research. He remarked he was comfortable with any of the top 3. He discussed his preference for larger companies with more resources and the experience of each company.

Councilmember Carter discussed the top 2 candidates, the history of the city, and Jacobs Engineering. He stated he was comfortable with either of the top 2 but, given a tie, would opt for Jacobs.

Councilmember Lawson discussed that he liked the top 2.

Councilmember Coxwell discussed respecting the objective scoring the review committee provided and stated she was comfortable with the top 2.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutton discussed being comfortable with the top 2 but leaned towards Jacobs. She discussed that if a contract is pursued with Jacobs, the expectations are higher, and Mary Esther will not be in the same city as five years ago.

Mayor Stein discussed how to do the voting process with the council to see who they like the most. City Attorney Dykes remarked that the city is looking for whom the council decides to proceed with negotiations. Councilmember Coxwell discussed that the council felt comfortable with the top 2 from the discussion. Mayor Stein discussed having a motion to narrow it down to the top 2 before having a motion for the selected company. City Attorney Dykes discussed that the city will enter into a negotiation with whoever the council chooses and bring the contract back for review in a future meeting. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to select from the first and second proposals. Mayor Pro Tem Sutton initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed 5-0.

RESULT:	**PASSED (5-0)**
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem April Sutton
SECOND:	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
AYES:	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
NAYS:	None

Mayor Pro Tem Sutton moved to extend a contract to Jacobs. Councilmember Carter seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

RESULT:	**PASSED (5-0)**
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem April Sutton
SECOND:	Councilmember Larry Carter
AYES:	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
NAYS:	None

Mayor Stein reiterated that Jacobs is the first choice based on the council's approval of the contract. City Attorney Dykes discussed that the motion would have the city enter negotiations and that it would include a 72-hour written protest period. Mayor Stein asked if there was a reason for the protest. City Attorney Dykes stated he did not see a reason to protest, but he is not the company.

11.3. Bus Stop Ordinance Discussion

City Manager Cobb provided the background for the discussion from last year when Fort Walton Beach passed an ordinance against bus stops. Councilmember Coxwell added more context: Fort Walton Beach passed an ordinance stopping bus stops for buses like Greyhound. She discussed that the city has no bus stops but wants to handle the situation ahead of time. Community Development Director Reed added that the bus stops have until September 2025 to close. City Manager Cobb discussed different ways to handle the situation, from prohibiting them to putting restrictions on them. Community Development Director Reed discussed current prohibitions in the code, limiting bus and truck terminals. However, bus stops are allowed, and there are various requirements. City Manager Cobb discussed the language used to define bus terminals and stops. Councilmember Oder addressed an interest in cleaning up the language but said he does not want to outlaw mass transit in the city forever. Mayor Pro Tem Sutton asked about what happened to the county transit, but City Manager Cobb stated they fall under a different classification than commercial. She said she would be against something getting rid of public transit. City Manager Cobb noted that the city is updating the comprehensive plan and can handle this simultaneously, depending on the priority. Mayor Stein asked if Greyhound had approached the city, but the city had not. City Manager Cobb stated that if Greyhound approached the city before the September deadline, the city would apply the current rules, not those that might come in the future. Mayor Stein stated that there is an agreement to come back with an ordinance.

12. COUNCILS' STANDING COMMITTEE STATUS REPORTS

Councilmember Oder discussed the library cooperative meeting, becoming the vice chairman of the Okaloosa County Public Library Committee, and the website. He also stated that he and the city manager would be going to Tallahassee for legislative meetings. He asked how the mayor and council felt about putting the cyber security badge on email signatures. The mayor and council stated they would all be fine with it.

Councilmember Carter stated he hoped to be home next month.

Mayor Stein had no additional comments.

Councilmember Lawson had no additional comments.

Councilmember Coxwell discussed Community Development Director Tyler attending the OSHIP meeting with her and seeing the snow in Florida from Arizona.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutton thanks Administrative Coordinator Macdonald for the photos of the snow in Mary Esther. She also thanked City Manager Cobb, Public Works Director Lindsey, City Clerk Morris, Kevin Kennoy, and Mark Wise for their work on the RFP2024-09.

13. OTHER COMMENTS

City Attorney Dykes had no additional comments.

City Clerk Morris reminded the mayor and council to check their mailboxes and discussed the upcoming FLC ethics training and the cybersecurity training requirement.

City Manager Cobb discussed the city's work with Hurlburt Field and Okaloosa County for the county wastewater connection. He also discussed the upcoming LPA and special council meetings.

14. ADJOURN

The council meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Minutes approved at the 3-3-25 **meeting.**

Dillon Morris

Dillon Morris, City Clerk