



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
MAY 7, 2024, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on May 7, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue (AVE), Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida (FL). The invocation was offered by Council Member McAuley; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Jarriel.

II. ATTENDANCE

City Clerk Lane Gamiotea called the roll. Members present to establish a quorum: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Vice Mayor Monica M. Clark, and Council Members Noel A. Chandler, Robert "Bob" Jarriel and David R. McAuley.

III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

- A. There were no requests for modifications to the agenda.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and McAuley to adopt the agenda as published.
Motion Carried Unanimously.
- C. There were no comment cards submitted for public participation for issues not on the agenda.

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

- A. Administrator Ritter introduced Mr. Andres Rodriguez. On May 3, 2024, he began his role as the City's new Contracts Manager.
- B. Mayor Watford proclaimed the month of May 2024 as Building Safety Month, **Exhibit 1**. The Proclamation was presented to City Building Official, Mr. Jeffery Newell, and read into the record as follows: "**Whereas, the City of Okeechobee is committed to recognizing that our growth and strength depends on the safety and essential role our homes, buildings, and infrastructure play, both in everyday life and when disasters strike; and Whereas, our confidence in the resilience of these buildings that make-up our community is achieved through the devotion of vigilant guardians: building safety and fire prevention officials, architects, engineers, builders, tradespeople, design professionals, laborers, plumbers, and others in the construction industry, who work year-round to ensure the safe construction of buildings; and Whereas, these guardians are dedicated members of the International Code Council, a nonprofit, that brings together local, state, territorial, tribal, and federal officials who are experts in the built environment to create and implement the highest quality codes to protect us in the buildings where we live, learn, work, play; and Whereas, these modern building codes include safeguards to protect the public from hazards such as hurricanes, snowstorms, tornadoes, wildland fires, floods, and earthquakes; and Whereas, Building Safety Month is sponsored by the International Code Council to remind the public about the critical role of our communities' largely unknown protectors of public safety, our local code officials, who assure us of safe, sustainable, and affordable buildings that are essential to our prosperity; and Whereas, Mission Possible, the theme for Building Safety Month 2024, encourages us all to raise awareness about building safety on a personal, local, and global scale; and Whereas, each year, in observance of Building Safety Month, people all over the world are asked to consider the commitment to improve building safety, resilience and economic investment at home and in the community, and to acknowledge the essential service provided to all of us by local and state building departments, fire prevention bureaus and federal agencies in protecting lives and property. Now, Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, FL, do hereby proclaim the month of May 2024 as Building Safety Month.**"
- C. Mayor Watford proclaimed the week of May 6 through 10, 2024, as Economic Development Week, **Exhibit 2**. The Proclamation was presented to Okeechobee County Economic Development Corporation President Mrs. Kaylee King, Director of Existing Industry Mrs. Alex Tijerina, Executive Committee Board Vice Chairman Mr. Frank Irby and Secretary Mr. Russ Brown, as well as Regular Board Members Mr. John Hayford and Administrator Ritter, then read into the record as follows: "**Whereas, more than 100,000 economic development or related professionals worldwide are committed to creating, retaining, and expanding top-tier opportunities that facilitate long term, equitable community growth; and**

IV. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS CONTINUED

- C. Continued. **Whereas, the economic development profession cultivates thriving neighborhoods, champions sustainability and resiliency, boosts economic prosperity, enhances the quality of life, and builds robust tax bases; and Whereas, economic development professionals operate throughout diverse economic environments, including rural, suburban, and urban settings; local, state, provincial, and national governments; public-private partnerships; chambers of commerce; institutions of higher education; among many similar organizations and associations; and Whereas, economic development professionals serve as stewards, bridging connections between community stakeholders such as residents, business leaders, elected officials, industry executives, and educational administrations, to collaborate in promoting job creation, community investment, infrastructure advancements, and an optimistic future; and Whereas, economic developers contribute to the betterment and progress of Okeechobee, which is located between two regions: the FL Heartland Economic Region of Opportunity and the FL Treasure Coast; and Whereas, since 1926, the International Economic Development Council has been a leader and driving force in advancing economic development initiatives, with a steadfast commitment to fostering growth and prosperity in communities of all sizes worldwide through equity, inclusion, sustainability, resilience, and innovation; and Now, Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, FL, do hereby proclaim May 6 through 10, 2024, as Economic Development Week and remind individuals of the importance of this community celebration which supports expanding opportunities, bettering lives, and moving society forward."**
- D. Mayor Watford proclaimed the week of May 5 through 11, 2024, as Professional Municipal Clerks Week, **Exhibit 3**. The Proclamation was presented to the City Clerk's Office Staff and read into the record as follows: **"Whereas, the Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk, a time honored and vital part of local government exists throughout the world; and Whereas, the Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk is the oldest among public servants; and Whereas, the Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk provides the professional link between the citizens, the local governing bodies and agencies of government at other levels; and Whereas, Professional Municipal Clerks have pledged to be ever mindful of their neutrality and impartiality, rendering equal service to all; and Whereas, the Professional Municipal Clerk serves as the information center on functions of local government and community; and Whereas, Professional Municipal Clerks continually strive to improve the administration of the affairs of the Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk through participation in education programs, seminars, workshops and the annual meetings of their state, provincial, county and international professional organizations; and Whereas, it is most appropriate that we recognize the accomplishments of the Office of the Professional Municipal Clerk. Now, Therefore, I, Dowling R. Watford, Jr., by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Okeechobee, FL, do hereby proclaim May 5 through 11, 2024 as Professional Municipal Clerks Week and further extend appreciation to our Certified Municipal Clerk Lane Gamiotea, Deputy City Clerk Katie Rogers, Administrative Secretary Cayetana Ortega, and to all Professional Municipal Clerks for the vital services they perform and their exemplary dedication to the communities they represent."**

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion and second by Council Members Jarriel and Chandler to:

- A. Dispense with the reading and approve the Minutes for April 16, 2024 [as presented in **Exhibit 4**]; and
- B. Appoint Mr. Frank Irby as a Regular Member to the Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) Board of Directors, term being May 8, 2024, through March 1, 2025, [replacing Mr. Tommy Clay, as presented in **Exhibit 5**].

Motion Carried Unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Mr. Hayford, Executive Director of the OUA, submitted a presentation [a copy of which has been incorporated in the official minute file and labeled as **Exhibit 7**], which provided an update for the ongoing projects taking place within the City and County of Okeechobee.
- B. Motion and second by Council Members Chandler and Jarriel to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1275, adopting [Land Development Regulations (LDR) Text Amendment] Application No. 23-002-TA revamping the Stormwater Management regulations within Chapter 78 of the Code of Ordinances [as presented in **Exhibit 6**].

Motion Carried Unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- B. Continued. City Attorney John Fumero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1275 as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FL; AMENDING PART II OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE CODE OF ORDINANCES, SUBPART B LDR, WITHIN CHAPTER 78 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, BY SPECIFICALLY AMENDING ARTICLE IV STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, AS SUBMITTED IN LDR TEXT AMENDMENT APPLICATION NO. 23-002-TA; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion by Council Member Jarriel, second by Vice Mayor Clark to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1275, and set June 4, 2024, as the final Public Hearing date.

Roll Call Vote: Chandler – Yea, Clark – Yea, Jarriel – Yea, McAuley – Yea, Watford – Yea.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

VII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

- Researching for an Opinion on allowing use of showers within the Public Safety Building for specific groups or organizations. However, it was also noted the issue may be mute since learning that the facilities at the First Baptist Church Recreation Outreach Center could be available.
- Finalizing the real estate closing documents for Biomedical Waste Facility within the Commerce Center.
- Amendments to the Code Enforcement Magistrate contract renewal are almost complete.

VIII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Working with City Attorney to draw up closing documents for the impending Commerce Center property sale to Landmark Precast, LLC.
- Attended the Indian River Lagoon Board Meeting today where stormwater issues were a topic. He stated he was able to brag about the City's baffle box system and usage of our vacuum truck to clean these systems.
- Advised there is a Bunkhouse Dedication at the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. on May 15, 2024.
- The City received a letter from the owners of the Park Street Commerce Center Subdivision requesting a tax reduction and inquired how the Council wanted to handle the request. Mayor Watford advised anyone can request to address the Council through the agenda.
- Inquired whether the Council wanted to revisit the Mobile Food Dispensing Vehicles (Food Trucks) Ordinance. Mayor Watford, Vice Mayor Clark, and Council Member Jarriel stated yes. He responded then it would be added to a future agenda.

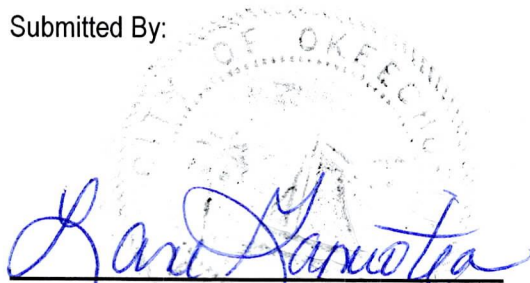
IX. COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Council Member Chandler thanked Mr. Irby for his willingness to serve on the OUA Board and wished all the mothers in attendance a Happy Mother's Day.
- Council Member McAuley thanked Clerk Gamiotea and her staff for all the work they do.
- Vice Mayor Clark stated that the plaza she owns is fully rented for the first time since it was built in 2005; and there is a grand opening for the newest tenant, Batteries Plus, at noon on May 10, 2024, there will be festivities including food trucks on site. Then, back to the subject of revisiting the Food Trucks Ordinance, pointed out that they should not be permanent and that their propane gas tanks cannot be outside. There have been a lot of comments on Facebook regarding this issue, with Mayor Watford taking most of the heat for it. The trucks should be safe and mobile, and she was willing to take some of the heat regarding the pushback on this issue.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 6:53 P.M.

Submitted By:



Lane Gamiotea, CMC, City Clerk

Please take notice and be advised that when a person decides to appeal any decision made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, s/he may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. City Clerk media are for the sole purpose of backup for official records of the Clerk.