



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
JANUARY 21, 2020, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
DRAFT SUMMARY OF COUNCIL ACTION

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watford called the regular session of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on Tuesday, January 21, 2020, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida.

- A.** The invocation was offered by Pastor Jim Dawson of the First United Methodist Church.
- B.** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Watford.

II. ATTENDANCE

City Clerk Lane Gamiotea called the roll. Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Council Members Wes Abney, Monica Clark, Bob Jarriel, and Bobby Keefe were present.

CITY STAFF: City Attorney John Fumero, City Administrator Marcos MontesDeOca, Police Chief Bob Peterson, Fire Chief Herb Smith, Public Works Director David Allen, and Deputy City Clerk Bobbie Jenkins were present.

III. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

- A.** There were no requests for the addition, deferral, or withdrawal of agenda items.
- B.** There were no agenda item forms or comment cards submitted for public participation for any issues not on the agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Council Member Abney to approve the consent agenda items **A** through **F** [the January 7, 2020, regular meeting minutes; the December 2019 Warrant Register in the amounts: General Fund \$691,100.62, Public Facilities Improvement Fund \$24,838.80, Capital Improvement Projects Fund \$6,454.16, Law Enforcement Special Fund \$75.00; temporarily close a portion of Southeast 2nd Avenue between Southeast 6th to 7th Streets on February 14, 2020, from 8:00 A.M. to 2:30 P.M., requested by Okeechobee Christian Academy for their annual Field Day; temporarily close a portion of Southwest 3rd and 4th Avenues between North and South Park Streets, and the 300 block of West South Park Street between Southwest 3rd and 4th Avenues, from 6:00 P.M. February 7 through 5:00 P.M. on February 9, 2020, requested by Okeechobee Main Street for the Top of the Lake Art Festival; purchase a 2020 Ford F-250 XL pickup truck from Bozard Ford Lincoln, in the amount of \$23,511.00 through the Florida Sheriff's Association Cooperative Purchasing Program for the Public Works Department; Grievance Committee appointed term being January 22, 2020 to January 31, 2022, or until their successor is appointed, regular members: David Cortez, Savanna Smith, Kade Smith, Melissa Henry, and Bobbie Jenkins; alternate members: Joshua Sanders, Brandon Griesemer, Willie Hall, India Riedel, and Robin Brock]; seconded by Council Member Jarriel.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

V. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:02 P.M.

- A.** A motion was made by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1200 by title only, regarding Comprehensive Plan Small Scale Future Land Use (FLU) Map Amendment Application No. 19-005-SSA, submitted by Mr. Omar Abuaita reclassifying Lots 1 through 10, and 17 through 26 of Block 39, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County Public Records, from Industrial (IND) to Multi Family Residential (MFR); seconded by Council Member Clark.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1200 by title only as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, ORDINANCE NO. 635 AS AMENDED, BY REVISING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP ON A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE**

PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN FROM IND TO MFR (APPLICATION NO. 19-005-SSA); PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION OF ORDINANCE AND REVISED FUTURE LAND USE MAP IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”

Council Member Jarriel moved to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1200; seconded by Council Member Keefe.

Council Member Abney noted for the record that the agent for this Application is also one of his business associates, and he verified with Attorney Fumero that he would not need to abstain from voting on this matter as there is not a conflict of interest.

Mayor Watford yielded to the floor to City Planning Consultant Mr. Ben Smith of LaRue Planning and Management Services. He presented the Planning Staff findings, together with the Planning Board’s review on December 19, 2019, both recommend approval. The subject property is located at Northwest 5th Avenue and 9th Street.

The Amendment was found to be consistent and compatible with the Comprehensive Plan and adjacent uses. The current surrounding FLU designations are IND to the South and West, MFR to the North, and Single Family Residential (SFR) and MFR to the East. The surrounding zoning districts are IND to the South and West, and Residential Multiple Family (RMF) to the North and East. The existing surrounding uses are an asphalt and concrete company to the South and West, vacant to the North, and apartments to the East. The Amendment has adequate public facilities available for multi-family use. The traffic impact statement provided estimates approximately 22 P.M. peak hour trips will be generated by the proposed 33 multi-family dwelling units, and should not affect the level of service to the surrounding roadways. Although the US Fish and Wildlife Service identified wetlands on the site, the applicant points out that this is only the remnant mining pit, and has no significant or unique characteristics regarding environmental sensitivity, wildlife habitat, soil conditions or susceptibility to flooding.

There is a concurrent Rezoning Petition No. 19-006-R that will be considered as New Business item **A** on tonight’s agenda. Should the Council approve this FLU change, the most appropriate type of zoning would need to be considered.

Planner Smith added the existing mining pit on the property will be used to mitigate storm water retention and storage. Upon approval, the Applicant will submit an Abandonment of Right-of-Way Petition and Unity of Title Application to utilize the property for a proposed development.

Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments. Mr. Steve Dobbs of 209 Northeast 2nd Street, Agent for the Applicant, responded to Mayor Watford’s questions regarding the existing shell pit by explaining the property owner has no desire to backfill the existing pit to gain more land. He continued explaining the maximum density for MFR FLU designation is 10 units per acre. The maximum development potential is 35 multi-family dwelling units for the 3.26 acres, but the Applicant is proposing to combine the subject property with the adjoining two blocks to the North for an apartment complex.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:16 P.M.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A.** A motion was made by Council Member Abney to read proposed Ordinance No. 1201 by title only, and set the Final Public Hearing date for February 4, 2020, regarding Rezoning Petition No. 19-006-R, submitted by Mr. Omar Abuaita to rezone Lots 1 through 10, and 17 through 26 of Block 39, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, Plat Book 5, Page 5, Okeechobee County Public Records, from IND to RMF; seconded by Council Member Jarriel.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1201 by title only as follows: **“AN**

ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE BY REZONING A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, FROM IND TO RMF ZONING DISTRICT (PETITION NO. 19-006-R); AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ACCORDINGLY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Council Member Keefe moved to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1201; seconded by Council Member Clark.

Planner Smith explained this Petition is for the same property as the previous approved Public Hearing item **A**, Ordinance No. 1200, Application No. 19-005-SSA. Both the Planning Staff and Planning Board have reviewed Petition No. 19-006-R, and recommends approval.

Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there were none.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

- B.** A motion was made by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1203 by title only, and set the Final Public Hearing date for February 4, 2020, regarding Land Development Regulations (LDR) Text Amendment No. 19-002-TA, amending Code Sections 90-78 to 90-83, 90-105, 90-135, 90-165, 90-167 to 90-172, and 90-196; seconded by Council Member Clark.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1203 by title only as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING CHAPTER 90 OF THE LDRS OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE; AMENDING SECTION 90-105, ADDING A MINIMUM DWELLING UNIT SIZE OF 1,000 SQUARE FEET FOR SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING UNITS IN THE RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY-ONE ZONING DISTRICT; AMENDING SECTION 90-135, ADDING A MINIMUM DWELLING UNIT SIZE OF 900 SQUARE FEET FOR SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING UNITS IN THE RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY-TWO ZONING DISTRICT; AMENDING SECTION 90-165, ADDING A MINIMUM DWELLING UNIT SIZE OF 800 SQUARE FEET FOR SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING UNITS IN THE RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOME ZONING DISTRICT; AMENDING SECTION 90-196, ADDING A MINIMUM DWELLING UNIT SIZE OF 800 SQUARE FEET FOR SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING UNITS IN THE RMF ZONING DISTRICT; RELOCATING HOUSING STANDARDS BY DELETING SECTIONS 90-167 THROUGH 90-172 FROM DIVISION 4 AND CREATING NEW SECTIONS 90-78 THROUGH 90-83 IN DIVISION 1; REVISING THE DEFINITION OF MINIMUM DWELLING UNIT SIZE IN SECTION 90-80; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”**

Council Member Keefe moved to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1203; seconded by Council Member Clark.

Planner Smith explained the Planning Board discussed the specific amendments at workshops held June 20, 2019, and August 15, 2019. The official Text Amendment was presented at their December 19, 2019 meeting, with the Planning Board recommending approval.

The Council discussed the proposed dwelling unit sizes and requested Mr. Smith provide them with the Housing of Urban Development (HUD) minimum square footage home standards, and an approximate number of City lots that are too small to accommodate a dwelling size of 1,000 square feet. The discussion also posed possible amendments to be considered at the Final Public Hearing as follows: add the words “and/or” to Section 90-79(1)(a); remove the words “cannot have a high-gloss finish and” from Section 90-80(4); and verify whether a minimum dwelling size will be under air or total, as it was

recommended for garages to be included in the minimum size. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there were none.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

- C. A motion was made by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1204 by title only, and set the Final Public Hearing date for February 4, 2020, regarding LDR Text Amendment No. 19-003-TA, amending Off-Street Parking and Loading, Code Section 90-512; seconded by Council Member Clark.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1204 by title only as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING CHAPTER 90 OF THE LDRS OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE; AMENDING SECTION 90-512, CREATING A NEW MINIMUM RESTAURANT PARKING STANDARD BASED ON CUSTOMER SERVICE AREA; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”**

Council Member Keefe moved to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1204; seconded by Council Member Clark.

Planner Smith explained the Planning Board discussed the specific amendments at workshops held August 15, 2019, and October 17, 2019. The official Text Amendment was presented at their December 19, 2019 meeting, with the Planning Board recommending approval.

After a brief discussion, the Council requested Mr. Smith to provide them with the specific businesses used as examples during the workshops, and include whether these businesses received a parking reduction. The discussion also posed possible amendments to be considered at the Final Public Hearing as follows: add a definition for customer service area. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there were none.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

- D. A motion was made by Council Member Jarriel to read proposed Ordinance No. 1205 by title only, and set the Final Public Hearing date for February 4, 2020, regarding LDR Text Amendment No. 19-004-TA, amending Special Exception and Supplemental Use Regulations, Code Section 90-692; seconded by Council Member Clark.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

Attorney Fumero read proposed Ordinance No. 1205 by title only as follows: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA; AMENDING CHAPTER 90 OF THE LDRS OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE; AMENDING SECTION 90-692, REVISING REQUIRED SETBACKS FOR SERVICE STATIONS AND UNDERGROUND FUEL TANKS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.”**

Council Member Clark moved to approve the first reading of proposed Ordinance No. 1205; seconded by Council Member Keefe.

Planner Smith explained the Planning Board discussed the specific amendments at a workshop held October 17, 2019. The official Text Amendment was presented at their December 19, 2019 meeting, with the Planning Board recommending approval.

There was a lengthy discussion among the Council pertaining to the proposed setbacks in Sections 90-692(6) for above ground fuel tanks and 90-692(7) for underground fuel tanks, as they may not comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines. Fire Chief Smith confirmed the he uses the NFPA guidelines. When there is a conflict between the NFPA regulations and the Code, he uses the stricter of the two. The Uniform Fire Code is adopted by reference. The Council may consider amending these Sections by referencing the NFPA requirements as opposed to the proposed setback requirements, which as pointed out by Planner Smith, mirror the current Heavy Commercial zoning setbacks. Mayor Watford opened the floor for public comments; there were none.

Mayor Watford, Council Members Abney, Clark, Jarriel, and Keefe voted: Aye. Nays: none. Motion Carried.

Mayor Watford recessed the meeting at 7:06 P.M. and reconvened at 7:16 P.M.

- E. Discuss City Fire Department contract options as presented by Fire Captain Lalo Rodriguez.

Captain Rodriguez made a presentation that provided an alternative option to lower the millage rate in lieu of merging the City and County Fire Departments together. He began with providing a history of the City Fire Department. Currently the Department has 13 employees; one Fire Chief, one Administrative Secretary, and 11 Firefighter/EMT's (which includes the Captain's position). These employees have a combined service experience of 147 years, and seven have a service history to the City of Okeechobee of 10 years or more.

The City has adopted a millage rate of 7.6018 for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 and is estimated to generate \$2,200,000.00 of ad valorem revenue. This rate calculates to be approximately 5 percent lower than the previous four adopted millage rates. The estimated revenue funds approximately 29 percent of the City's general fund budget for the current FY, as the total general fund budget is approximately \$7,500,000.00. The average millage rate for 2004 through 2009 was 6.926, with the lowest rate being 6.5010 in FY 2006-07. He included the prior FY millage rates as follows: 7.2432 for FY 2009-10; 7.743 for FY 2010-11; 7.7432 for FY 2011-12; 7.7432 for FY 2012-13; 7.7432 for FY 2013-14; 7.9932 for FY 2014-15; 7.9932 for FY 2015-16; 7.9932 for FY 2016-17; 7.9932 for FY 2017-18; and 7.6018 for FY 2018-19.

The City Fire Department expenditures were \$1,068,979.00 in FY 2013-14, \$1,122,821.00 in FY 2014-15, \$1,189,713.00 in FY 2015-16, \$1,245,531.00 in FY 2016-17, \$1,320,775.00 in FY 2017-18, and \$1,261,893.00 in FY 2018-19.

At the January 8, 2020, Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting, County Fire Chief Franklin presented a proposed cost of \$700,000.00 for the first year for the County to provide fire services in the City. The presentation provided projected costs for an additional two years. However, those projections were disregarded as the Fire Union Contract is to be re-negotiated, which will increase costs, that are unknown until the negotiations are completed. Included in Chief Franklin's proposal was the addition of six personnel, two personnel per shift to provide coverage for the City. This is a decrease in the level of service the City provides, which is three to four personnel per shift.

He then used the example of the increased costs to the current Animal Control Contract with the County. The chart provided showed the drastic fluctuations of the costs from 2008 to 2019, with an increased overall average of 119.71 percent. In his opinion, this contract shows that the costs for fire services provided by the County will ultimately cost the citizens more when compared to the current operating costs of the City Fire Department.

Captain Rodriguez contacted Glades County Manager Mr. Bob Jones and confirmed that Okeechobee County currently provides the Buckhead Ridge area of Glades County with Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Mr. Jones provided him with contract costs and since 2016-17 the contract has risen from \$90,000.00 to \$117,000.00. The 2019-20 contract year is estimated to be \$123,000.00, which is an overall increase of 36 percent

since 2016. Due to the continued increase in costs, Glades County recently established a full-time fire rescue department and has plans to expand to full county coverage in the future. Again, this provides an insight to the City that the County would increase costs considerably.

Mr. Jones suggested the City implement an EMS service once the employees become certified Paramedics, and is willing to help implement the service. Captain Rodriguez has researched possible grants to partially fund equipment purchases and personnel costs, and Mr. Jones is willing to assist in writing the grants. He is also willing to lend the City two Advanced Life Support (ALS) Units and two Lifepak 15 monitor/defibrillators at no cost, until the City receives their own equipment.

The estimated costs of expanding EMS services to offer ALS were provided. The startup costs totaled \$1,600,000.00 for 10 years, which included \$750,000.00 for the purchase of two ALS vehicles, 2 Lifepak 15's, medicine, and other equipment; \$700,000.00 increase to salary for 10 personnel; and \$150,000.00 for the Medical Director ALS costs. The breakdown of equipment costs for 10 years comes to \$160,000.00 per year. Adding that to the current Department budget increases the total Department budget to \$1,360,000.00.

Captain Rodriguez provided examples of revenue sources to fund the potential EMS program: 1. Implement a City EMS Assessment: the County currently collects an EMS Assessment from City residents and businesses that totals approximately \$344,000.00. 2. Transport revenue: the County receives an average of \$480,000.00 per year in transport revenue (1,200 average medical call volume billed at a rate of \$400.00). 3. Implement a Fire Assessment which could generate approximately \$460,000.00 in revenue based on the current County Assessment rate. These three sources total approximately \$1,284,000.00 of annual revenue, leaving an unfunded cost of \$76,000.00 before applying for possible grant funding.

The two grants available that assist with fire services are offered by the Federal Emergency Management Association. The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant provides funding to help with increasing or maintaining trained firefighter personnel, and can fund up to 75 percent of staff cost and benefits for two years. The remaining 25 percent would be paid for by the City. The Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) provides funding for equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training and other resources necessary for protecting the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards.

Steps are already under way by the City to fund a Fire and EMS Assessment Study to be conducted in conjunction with the County's Study. This topic was discussed at the January 8, 2020, BOCC meeting. The City will be paying approximately \$10,000.00 to Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. to determine possible Fire and EMS Assessment rates within the City. Council Member Abney questioned this Study as he was unaware of such decision. Administrator MontesDeOca explained there was discussion at that BOCC meeting to allow the City to piggyback on the County's contract for \$10,000.00. Council Member Keefe requested this be discussed once Captain Rodriguez's presentation was complete.

Captain Rodriguez continued by providing a few examples of community events his Department participates in. Department personnel patrol festivals in the park with the golf cart handing out water and gatorade on hot days to prevent heat episodes, build the City float for the Christmas parade, take Santa around the neighborhoods, and provides a puppet show for children to educate them on fire safety. He asked whether the County would continue providing this to the residents, as these are some of the things the residents enjoy.

The presentation continued with the breakdown of ad valorem taxes the City receives. The example of a home valued at \$50,000.00 was used. The millage rate represents the tax rate used to calculate property taxes per every \$1,000.00 of the property's taxable value. For a property in the City with a taxable value of \$50,000.00, the tax paid would be \$380.09 at the current millage rate of 7.6018 (\$50,000.00 divided by \$1,000.00 equals \$50.00 owed for every \$1,000.00 in value; \$50.00 multiplied by the rate of 7.6018 equals \$380.09). When you take the \$380.09 and divide it by four to equally distribute the funds

among the General Admin/Services, Police, Fire and Public Works Department budgets, each will receive \$95.02 per year from that homeowner, which averages out to be \$7.91 per month. At approximately \$95.00 per year, that City homeowner is able to have a dedicated City fire service. (Budget, millage, and animal control services content was provided by the Finance Department. This annotation was included on the slides of the powerpoint presentation, of which a copy has been printed and made part of the official minute file).

Captain Rodriguez then turned to the level of service and concerns by explaining on January 2, 2020, a structure fire call came into the County. Due to the Automatic Aid Agreement, three City Firefighters responded to that call; Captain Rodriguez stayed behind to man City Station One. All personnel from County Fire Station One and Two were dispatched to respond to the call. The medical unit was pulled from County Fire Station Four, located on Highway 441 North, to cover County Station One calls, leaving only an engine to cover the zone for Station Four. While fighting the fire, a traffic accident involving a rollover on Highway 98 North came in. The medical unit from County Station Four, now located at County Station One, responded. As per County protocol, County Station Four's engine responded as well. While in route to that call, another traffic accident call came in for a potential rollover on Highway 441 North. County responded and said there was no coverage available to take the call. Captain Rodriguez would have been able to respond to that call if it were in the City Limits. However, should the City Fire Department no longer exist, then there would have been no unit to dispatch, leaving the City without coverage.

On January 16, 2020, a structure fire call came into the City. Due to the rapid response time of the City engine, Lieutenant Crum's shift quickly had the scene under control prior to the County responding to assist, which saved two other structures and prevented another two families from being displaced. The same day, the County received a fire call that required City assistance. Three personnel were dispatched to that call leaving Lieutenant Hodges to man City Station One. A structure fire call came into the City with Lieutenant Hodges responding without assistance. Upon arrival, he established through an investigation the fire was under control. There was a delayed response from the County of seven minutes to assist the City Lieutenant, which could have cost the home to be lost. It is Captain Rodriguez's opinion, from the recent call activity, that the citizens will suffer the most from the possible merger/contract of services.

He then distributed exhibit items from the final budget amendments for the prior four FY's that showed the actual amounts of reserves used to balance the general fund operational budgets: FY 2015-16 \$103,392.00 of the projected \$899,441.00 was transferred; FY 2016-17 none of the projected \$751,034.00 was transferred; FY 2017-18 none of the projected \$535,453.00 was transferred; and FY 2018-19 none of the projected \$845,215.00 was transferred. He provided this information with the intentions to clarify that the City may project the use of reserves to balance the overall general fund budget, but the actual use is not always needed. He further noted the funds are used to balance all Departments' budgets, not just the Fire Department budget. FY 2019-20 budget reflects the use of \$1,233,181.00 from reserves to balance the overall general fund budget. Captain Rodriguez thanked the Council for the opportunity to present them with an option to save the Fire Department and the jobs of the employees who work there.

Mayor Watford thanked him for the thorough presentation and suggested the Council review the information. He opened the floor for Council questions. Council Member Clark responded to the use of reserve funds by stating the City did not use reserves for operational expenditures, but for the use of capital improvement item purchases. Council Members Abney, Jarriel and Keefe expressed their appreciation for the research and information provided.

Council Member Keefe stated he recently spoke with Chief Franklin who implied the County is not aware of the City's intention and is still waiting on an official request. The City continues to talk about the issue with no clear direction being given to them. Council Member Keefe would like the Council to decide so that negotiations can begin, and the County can know for certain what the City is asking from them. Mayor Watford disagreed with Chief Franklin's implication, as the presentation given at the January 8, 2020, BOCC meeting was a direct result from the Council's consensus regarding the questions received from the County and discussed at the December 17, 2019, Council meeting. The

BOCC instructed their Administrator to get with Administrator MontesDeOca to work out the details of a contract, and present it to both agencies at a later date.

Council Member Keefe then moved to enter contract negotiations with the County to provide fire services in the City; Mayor Watford stated the motion was not in order and referred to Attorney Fumero for direction. Attorney Fumero explained a motion would be in order instructing the Administrator to perform fact finding. When a motion requires a decision, he suggested the item be placed on a future agenda for proper public notification. Additionally, as there is more than one contract option, a motion to begin contract negotiations has more than one option imbedded in the motion. Due to the nature of the topic and its importance, Attorney Fumero recommended the item of considering a contract be placed on a future agenda. Council Member Keefe withdrew his motion.

See Council Comments for further directives related to this topic.

VII. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Abney questioned the reason why the status updates for the capital improvement projects and street paving schedules were not included in the status report he received. Administrator MontesDeOca apologized and explained the street paving schedule is pending from the Florida Department of Transportation and the capital improvement projects status would be provided right away.

Council Member Jarriel voiced his displeasure in the handling of the fire service merger issue. He questioned why the City and County Administrators had not provided the Council with a proposed contract for review as requested by BOCC Chair Terry Burroughs at their January 8, 2020, meeting. He applauded Captain Rodriguez for his efforts on the presentation.

Council Member Keefe commented on the presentation the Economic Council of Okeechobee gave on the City Parks Conceptual Plan, requested the City support this Plan, and that it be placed on the next agenda for consideration. **The consensus of the Council was to place this on the February 4, 2020, agenda.**

He then voiced his concerns with the downtown parking issues that the citizens and festival goers continue to face, and suggested the City consider constructing a parking garage or parking lot on some of the available vacant lots in the downtown area. He requested that research begin on this item. **The consensus of the Council was to place this item on a future agenda.**

Lastly, he requested that the creation of a contract between the City and County for fire services be placed on the next agenda to allow the Council to engage in distinct negotiations, which will provide a distinct direction. **The consensus of the Council was to place this item on the February 4, 2020, agenda.**

Council Member Clark requested the Administrator to review and verify the information and figures provided in Captain Rodriguez's presentation. She also requested that the numbers provided by Chief Franklin at the January 8, 2020, BOCC meeting be presented at the next Council meeting. **The consensus of the Council was to have this information be placed on the agenda prior to the proposed fire services contract item requested by Council Member Keefe.**

Council Member Keefe then re-addressed the issue of the City piggybacking with the County on the Fire/EMS Assessment Study as discussed earlier in the meeting. Administrator MontesDeOca elaborated that the cost to include the City in the Study would be approximately \$10,000.00 in lieu of the full \$40,000.00 proposed during the budget process, and will provide the true cost of Fire/EMS services within the City. He added the Study is not anticipated to be completed in the next 30-days. Council Member Abney suggested the Council refrain from making any decisions on a Contract with the County until the Study is complete. Council Member Clark questioned the need for the City to be involved in this Study. Administrator MontesDeOca replied the City's participation is strictly to verify the numbers the County would charge City residents.

The Council Comments then turned into the discussion of negotiating a contract for fire services with the County. Council Member Clark was concerned with the short time frame given to the Administrator to verify figures and collect additional information.

Mayor Watford recognized Fire Chief Smith who questioned whether the Council would be voting on a contract at the next meeting, as he is concerned that the Council is not open to pursuing other options, with the exception of a few comments made by Council Members Abney and Clark this evening. Council Member Keefe verified that his intention of adding the item to the next agenda was to officially vote on a motion that provides clear direction of what the City wants and what needs to be negotiated. These negotiations need to include the County hiring City Firefighters, salary comparisons, longevity concerns, severance packages, level of service, and so on. The actual contract would not be voted on at the next meeting. Council Members also clarified that they are open to, and will consider, Captain Rodriguez's option. Mayor Watford closed the floor for comments.

- VIII.** There being no further items on the agenda, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 8:47 P.M. The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 4, 2020, at 6:00 P.M.

Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

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, he/she 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.