

September 17, 2024  
5:30 PM

The City Council of the City of Inverness met on the above date in Regular Session at 212 W. Main Street with the following members present:

President Hepfer  
Vice President Davis  
Councilwoman Bega  
Councilwoman Lizanich  
Councilman McBride  
Mayor Plaisted

Also present were City Manager Williams, City Attorney Hartley, Staff Members, and City Clerk Jackson.

**FINAL BUDGET AND MILLAGE LEVY**

**Resolution 2023-13 and 2023-14 Final Millage and Budget Adoption Public Hearing\*** with the following Notice was served to all Council, Mayor, Media, publicly posted, and TRIM Notices were mailed to each City of Inverness property owner by the Property Appraiser’s Office.

**City Council Full Budget Workshop – Public Notice** DATE: March 1, 2024

PLEASE BE ADVISED **BUDGET RELATED WORKSHOPS FOR FY 2024/25** ARE CALLED FOR THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS, AT 212 W. MAIN STREET, INVERNESS, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

April	2, 2024	5:30pm	Overview Workshop of Projects & Goals
May	7, 2024	5:30pm	Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Workshop
July	16, 2024	5:30pm	City-Wide Budget Workshop
Sept.	3, 2024	5:30pm	Tentative Budget Adoption - 1 <sup>st</sup> Public Hearing
Sept.	17, 2024	5:30pm	Final Budget Adoption - Final Public Hearing

/s/ Jacquie Hepfer  
President of City Council

Council President Hepfer opened the public hearing. She commenced by stating the purpose of this hearing is for the final adoption of a property tax rate (or millage) and budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year for the City of Inverness. A proposed property tax rate was advertised on the TRIM notices of 7.7600 mills. The City of Inverness budget has been finalized using the rate 7.6600 mills. The Final millage rate is greater than the rolled back rate of 7.2564 mills by 5.56%.

Council President asked for Council input and there was none.

Council President asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Council as to any item within the Budget or millage levy. No one spoke for or against. Debbie Wheatley stated to Council that she appreciates the budget being easy to understand.

Council President stated be advised that the proposed budget was developed using the rate of 7.6600 mills. The next motion must be to adopt the final millage rate. Any budget amendments may be made after adoption of the final millage rate. Called for a motion to read the Final Mill Levy Resolution by title only. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to read the Resolution by title only. Seconded by Councilman Davis. The motion carried.**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2024-13**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS OF CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE FINAL LEVYING OF AD VALOREM TAXES FOR THE CITY OF INVERNESS FOR FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING ON OCTOBER 1, 2024 AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2025; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**Councilman Davis motioned to adopt the Final Mill Levy Resolution adopting a final millage rate of 7.6600 mills for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilman Davis, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman McBride, yes; Council President Hepfer, yes. The motion carried.**

President Hepfer asked if there was a motion to read the Final Budget Resolution by title only. **Councilwoman Lizanich motioned to read the Final Budget Resolution by title only. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried unanimously.**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2024-14**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS OF CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA ADOPTING A FINAL BUDGET COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2024 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025; PROVIDING FOR PROPOSED EXPENDITURES; PROVIDING TAXABLE VALUES; PROVIDING FOR OPERATIVE FISCAL YEAR; PROVIDING FOR EXPENDITURES DURING FISCAL YEAR AND SUBSEQUENT HOLD OVER FUNDS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**Councilwoman Bega motioned to adopt the Final Budget Resolution adopting the final budget for the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year as proposed by roll call vote. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilman Davis, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman McBride, yes; Council President Hepfer, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

**The Public Hearing was closed.**

The Invocation was given by Councilman McBride and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by the City Council.

**ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

Councilman Davis motioned to accept the Agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.

**PRE-SCHEDULED APPEARANCES**

None

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS / WORKSHOP**

**5)a) Ordinance 2024-839 Entertainment District Amendment - Adoption** with City Manager Williams stating the City has been hosting events in the Downtown Business District for over a decade. The approach relied on the closures of streets and the time from time provision of open container alcohol sales, thus competing with the local businesses. The state allows for the establishment of certain geographically defined Entertainment Districts by way of local ordinance adoption to allow for temporary expansion of premises for the purpose of beer and wine sales by businesses within the defined area under certain guidelines and controls. Local business owners have indicated a desire to add the sale of alcohol to the currently approved beer and wine sales. Including liquor and distilled beverages is a potential opportunity to incorporate existing businesses into downtown events, increase walkability between businesses during an event, increase activity within the Downtown Business District to promote more events, and encourage downtown establishments to work together and increase revenue from downtown events. **The public hearing was opened.** City Manager Williams provided a detailed explanation. David Mohr – Storm Distillery noted the decision should be what is best for the businesses and the business district. Keith Shewbart – Twysted Vine stated he is in favor of the change. Meilin Gilmet - Hernando spoke of culture to keep family and elderly safe. Stated the change will continue for other changes. Spoke of paganism and satanism and was against money budgeted. Debra Garner – S. Romans Ave. spoke of reevaluating the liquor change after some time and spoke of type of tourism. Bobby Everett – Coach’s and Salty Dogs stated he is for the ordinance and noted people already drink on the streets, this won’t make a difference. Robb Obenrader – W. Dampier is for the ordinance and spoke of other cities that had no problems. Ryan Dhondt – Mulberry Pt. is for the ordinance and people are here to have a good time, not going to change. John Labriola – Eisenhower W. stated the change has not been thought out. Moving away from Small Town Done Right. Limits are needed. Harold Waddington – W. Wood Lynn Ln. spoke of Cooterween and soon won’t recognize Inverness. Alicia McBratney – Goodyear Ave. stated she represented young families. She supports downtown businesses and people make choices. Maybe reassess change in the future after trying. Councilwoman Lizanich agreed to reevaluate after one year but won’t know until it’s tried. Councilwoman Bega noted downtown has had beer and wine for years and it has gone well with the events, businesses, etc. It can always be rescinded in the future if there are issues. City Manager Williams referenced the quarterly reports presented to Council by the Sheriff’s Office. Spoke of past events and alcohol downtown. Deputy Ruby stated there have been no arrests at any event due to alcohol. It is policed well. It was noted that coolers are policed for contents. Councilman McBride stated he has opposed this from the start. Openly carrying around liquor is not reflective of the City. Spoke of other events at the parks, etc. Councilman Davis stated he has lived in Inverness 72 years. Voted no the last time and spoke of the motto of Small Town Done Right. This is not the right perception, could get bad reputation. President Hepfer stated she is not condoning drunkenness as people drink in front of their children at home. Need to apply common sense.

**Councilwoman Lizanich motioned to have the Clerk read Ordinance 2024-839 by Title only. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried.**

### **ORDINANCE 2024-839**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
INVERNESS, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION 18-34, "OUTSIDE**

**CONSUMPTION IN THE DOWNTOWN ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT  
(1) DEFINITIONS"; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, CONFLICTS,  
AND SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**Councilwoman Lizanich motioned to approve Ordinance 2024-839 by roll-call vote on a final reading. Seconded by Council woman Bega. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman McBride, no; Councilman Davis, no; and President Hepfer, yes. Motion carried.**

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETING**

Debra Garner spoke of promoting a healthy environment and of issues she has experienced in the community. Disappointed of how funding is spent for certain tourism. April Wnuk stated she is not happy regarding the Cooter October festivities. Noted funding of \$100,000 of taxpayer's money. Spoke of past Christmas event downtown. Opposes certain events in October. Wants what is best for the community. Anna Loughridge spoke of taking a public stand against Amendment 4. Spoke of history. Debbie Wheatley – Silverwood reminded that Council had already stated their beliefs, and we need to stick to City business. John Labriola spoke of Cootertober festivities and \$74,000 spending on the events. Spoke of Amendment 4, a manger scene at City Hall, and history of Cooter Fest. Mac McGarry – Car Club spoke of the Third Friday car show event, and it is a big revenue maker for the downtown restaurants. This is the only car show on the third Friday and people come from all over to enjoy. Spoke of past events and fundraisers. Mike Slivak – N. Outrigger Terr. helped start the car shows. He read a letter from a couple from Pompano Beach that attend the show and spent the weekend in Inverness. Rick Matherson – Hernando spoke of his concerns of Cootertober and should not spend that kind of money. Need to go back to original Cooter Fest. Ruby Burton – Inverness grew up here and addressed concerns for our community. Alicia McBratney thanked Council for keeping City business separate. Spoke of plans to attend events in October and spoke of concerns that could create division. Carmelita Carothers – Hunting Lodge does not agree with October fest and dark arts. Spoke of July 3 issues during event, accountability and responsibility. Scott Morris – Floral City spoke of enjoying the car show and it brings good memories. Keith Shewbart feels the car show harms his business and believes there is a better solution. Quoted research he conducted regarding his business sales. Not opposed to the car show, just the night and venue. Need what is good for Inverness as a whole. Rhonda Muscaro – Beverly Hills spoke of participating in the car show and this beautiful, quaint town being the reason they moved here. David Mohr noted the time involved starts at 11:00am when the show doesn't start until 5:00pm and the impact on business.

**CITY ATTORNEY REPORT**

None

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- a) Bill Listing\*
  - Recommendation – Approval
- b) Council Minutes – 09/03/2024\*
  - Recommendation – Approval

**Councilwoman Bega motioned to accept the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried.**

### **CITY CLERK'S REPORT**

None

### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

**10)a) Residential Garbage Service Proposed Schedule Changes\*** with City Manager Williams stating the City has a great residential garbage service provided by GFL and Waste Management. Waste Management is currently providing residential trash, recycling, yard waste, and bulk item pickup services for City residents. The pickup schedule currently assigns different days of the week for various types of waste. Waste Management is proposing to change the schedule so that residents will put all four types of waste out on their scheduled pickup day. This will be less confusing for residents to follow and create efficiencies for the way Waste Management runs its routes. Waste Management is proposing the changes to be in effect on 10/14/24. Waste Management provided a flier insert for the September utility bills and will also mail a postcard, with communication starting October 14, 2024. Tom McCoy with Waste Management provided a presentation detailing the proposed change. **Council consensus was supportive of the one-day service and provided direction to move forward with the proposed changes.**

**10)b) Third Friday Car Show\*** with City Manager Williams stating in February 2020, the Third Friday Night Car Show was moved from the downtown area to Wallace Brooks Park. The downtown businesses lobbied the Council to move the Third Friday Car Show back to the downtown area in hopes of bringing more people back into the area and help the businesses recover from the COVID pandemic. In February 2021 the Car Show moved back to the downtown area. In June 2021, the City partnered with the Citrus Vettes & Camaros Car Club Inc. to manage the event. The downtown businesses are now thriving, and the car show is having some negative effects in downtown. The agreement expires at the end of September with the Citrus Vettes & Camaros Car Club Inc. with the Club may not be able to continue managing the Car Show if a change is made to location and/or day. In the event a change is made to the location, the Club would like to host an October 18th and November 8th Car Show in the downtown area. The Corvettes and Camaros Car Club have been great partners for the City. Mac McGarry with the Citrus Vettes and Camaros Car Club addressed Council with details of the club and all they do for Veterans organizations, etc. Councilwoman Lizanich questioned the early set-up should not happen before 3:00pm. Questioned a different day, like on a Sunday, concerned with retail businesses as well at restaurants. Spoke of the success of the Jeep show that was on a Sunday just recently. City Manager Williams reminded that this is the City's car show by funding the events and Council would need to decide about closing the streets. This discussion must be conducted publicly by the Council and options should be considered. The car club wants the show to remain on Friday only. Mayor Plaisted stated the Council is pro-business and suggested the club work to help the businesses as the club does wonderful things, but the Council must look out for the local businesses. Mr. McGarry stated they are happy to work with the businesses. Spoke of issues and conflicts moving to a different night for the event. Councilman McBride spoke of the event management and consideration of the local businesses. He questioned where the cars come from with

Mr. McGarry stating various cities, from South Florida, Ocala, etc. Councilwoman Bega noted a lack of communication would help to resolve the issues. Councilman Davis stated he likes car shows, but businesses are being impacted as the event shuts off the downtown. Needs to be a compromise. Council President Hepfer agreed with Councilwoman Bega that more input is needed. **Councilman Davis motioned to continuing with the Citrus Vettes & Camaros Car Club Inc. having the Third Friday Car Show in the downtown area and authorize City Manager to execute the agreement documents. Also to have City Manager Williams involved in discussions. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried.**

**10)c) Whispering Pines Park Administrative Building Lease Agreement – CCSO\*** with City Manager Williams stating the City has a mutually beneficial relationship with the CCSO for the lease of the former Whispering Pines Park Administrative Office Building. As the Council is aware, this building has been leased by the CCSO for several years. The arrangement provides not only revenue from the lease but an enhanced/increased law enforcement presence in the park. The incoming Sheriff will take office January 7, 2025. Knowing there could be changes, the agreement is being modified to go through the end of the current sheriff's term, January 6, 2025. The agreement's rental rate is \$1,711.32/month. **Councilman Davis motioned to renew the modified lease agreement with the Citrus County Sheriff's Office for the use of the former Whispering Pines Park Administrative Building through the end of the calendar year and authorize the City Manager execute the document. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried.**

**10)d) CORE Center Agreements – Chamber & CORE\*** with City Manager Williams stating on November 22, 2021, the City entered into a facility use agreement with the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, Inc. for the property owned by the City at 203 E. Dampier Street to operate the Citrus County One Stop Recovery and Economic Center. The Recovery Center was established to assist the community's small business sector recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, with the impacts of the pandemic largely resolved, the Recovery Center transitioned to providing economic development assistance to existing and prospective businesses headquartered in Citrus County and became a separate and distinct entity from the Chamber but continued to use the CORE acronym. The acronym CORE was modified to stand for Citrus One Stop Resource Entrepreneur Business Center and CORE continued to use the premises, along with the Chamber, for its new purposes. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to approve the facility use agreement with the Chamber for the use of the property owned by the City located at 203 E. Dampier Street, Inverness, FL. Seconded by Councilman Davis. The motion carried.**

**Councilwoman Bega motioned to approve the facility use agreement with the CORE for the use of the property owned by the City located at 203 E. Dampier Street, Inverness, FL. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.**

**10)e) Chronicle Advertising Agreement\*** with City Manager Williams stating on May 3, 2022, Council approved a pilot program for advertising with the Citrus County Chronicle to partner with the City. The program was successful, and the partnership has seen significant impacts with the outreach prior to events and with the community involvement through these advertisements. The agreement will cost \$5,714 for major events, \$1,800 for minor events, and \$2,167 for reoccurring monthly events. John Murphy with the

Chronicle was present to discuss and answer any questions. He spoke of the goal is to make it easier for all and of the strategy of volume. Councilwoman Bega asked for the total cost with City Manager Williams quoting approx. \$50,000. Councilman Davis questioned the amount of subscribers of printed papers vs. digital with Mr. Murphy stating there are several thousands for both. **Councilwoman Lizanich motioned to accept the Chronicle's, Paxton Media Group's, advertising agreement and allow City Manager to execute the agreement. Seconded by Councilman Davis. The motion carried.**

**10)f) Citrus County Community Charitable Foundation - Alternate\*** with City Manager Williams stating an alternate City representative for the foundation is required in the by-laws. The annual meeting for the 2024-2025 Foundation's Board of Directors will be October 24, 2024. Both the City's representatives will be sworn in as an official Board Member at that time. **Councilman Davis motioned to appoint Councilwoman Bega as the alternate Board Member for the CCCC. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried.**

**10) g) Project/Program Updates (Verbal)**

- Turtle Sculptures will be unveiled on September 27 near the Valerie fountain.
- Wayfind Sign Project will include \$300,000 in new signage around the City, including replacement of Whispering Pines Park sign on Hwy. 44.
- Annual Road Improvement Project is having Pine Grove community roads paved at this time and are prepping other areas.
- Reclaim Water Service – Holden Park is in construction and should be complete in 2 weeks.
- Other included recent tournaments at Whispering Pines Park with 40 travel ball teams and 64 flag football teams. Cooter King and Queen competition was this past Friday. Other Cootertober events are coming.

**COUNCIL/MAYOR SUBJECTS**

Councilman McBride attended the September 5 MPO meeting where they discussed the Long-Term Transportation Plan, the Withlacoochee State Trail revamp, and the continuation of work on Hwy 41 N.

Councilwoman Lizanich had no comments.

Councilwoman Bega had no comments.

Councilman Davis had no comments.

Mayor Plaisted spoke about Amendment 4. Stated he has been questioned about pickleball courts and motorbikes on the trail. City Manager Williams noted that E-bikes are using the state trail and referenced state statutes.

President Hepfer stated she believes there have been misunderstandings regarding various issues and stated Inverness is the Small Town Done Right.

**CITIZENS NOT ON AGENDA**

Debbie Wheatley questioned the location of the turtle sculpture unveiling with confirmation it will be near the Valerie Plaza fountain.

Anna Loughridge again spoke of opposition to Amendment 4.

Keith Shewbart thanked Council for listening to his concerns and asked that the City Manager “mediate” the talks with the car club in a formal setting.

John Labriola again spoke of his concerns regarding Cootertoher, tax dollars being spent, Amendment 4, and a manger on City property.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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City Clerk

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Council President