

October 1, 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.

The Invocation was given by Mayor Plaisted and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by the City Council.

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

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

PRE-SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

4)a) Festival of the Arts 2024 with Parks & Rec Program Coordinator Brown providing detailed information regarding the upcoming Festival of the Arts – Small Town Hearts Embrace the Arts, on November 2 & 3, 2024. Noted this is the 53rd year of the festival and provided details of the various events planned. Tom Craig, President of the Inverness Arts and Cultural Alliance, spoke to advertisements for the festival and the multiple events.

4)b) Cootertober 2024 with Parks & Rec Director Worley providing a history of the Cooter Festival and compared it to the month long Cootertober. Spoke of the success due to community partners being invested in the City and the events. This gets better each year. Presented a video promoting Cootertober with City staff members, Hannah Spittlehouse and Bobby Malke. Councilwoman Lizanich referenced the haunted house at the Historic Courthouse, along with regular hours, will also have a specific time for sensory sensitive participants. Also, there will be a sign language interpreter for story time at the Depot Pavilion. This shows that Twistid Arts Initiative is determined to be inclusive of all who wish to participate in the Cootertober events. Mayor Plaisted spoke of the expense of Cooter Fest in past years and now there is a whole month of events for almost ½ the cost. Councilman McBride plans to attend many events and it will be a great time. Councilman Davis spoke of growing up with carnivals coming to Inverness and trick or treating. It is great to have local businesses participation and is excited for the events to get started. Councilwoman Bega stated the video is a great touch and will generate a lot of attention. Council President Hepfer thought the video was terrific. She spoke of history and the whole town's involvement.

PUBLIC HEARINGS / WORKSHOP

None

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

The following members of public spoke of concerns and/or opposition of Cootertober: Harold Waddington, Patty Adams, James West, April Wnuk, Carla Andridge, Lala Sanders, and John Labriola. Those in support of Cootertober, criticizing misinformation being circulated, personal attacks, etc. were: Ben Olson, Alicia McBratney, and Brian Hall. Debbie Selsavage spoke of the upcoming dementia fundraiser during Cootertober, downtown business participation, etc. Spoke about providing a wealth of information and education regarding dementia, as well as providing support and resources. Mimi Clark, Norca Prestidge, and Mindy Gray were grateful for the opportunity to be a vendor at the year-round Market at the Depot and spoke of the support from other vendors, support from the City and the community. Rane Herzek spoke of the upcoming CASA Walk for Awareness on October 19 and spoke of the CASA does. Rachel Vazquez & Holly provided information on the upcoming old time radio shows at the Valerie Theatre. Sue Whitey with the Valerie Players spoke of the upcoming Dracula production and provided dates and times. Jodi Zakaria & Dawn stated ROCCS is excited to be a part of Cootertober. Reminded that the Regatta will be October 5 with 15 teams participating. Dawn spoke of the Casino night fundraiser on October 12. Debra Garner spoke of her involvement in a 4-year clinical trial for Alzheimer's. Tom Craig with the Festival of the Arts expecting a great group of artists. Spoke of the exciting interactive art projects and of Cooterween. Nancy (Cookie) Plaisted spoke of telephone call she received on September 22 regarding the election and candidate Labriola. She spoke of the voicemail left and that she called back and left a message regarding misinformation. She has known Council President Hepfer for 25 years.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

- a) Bill Listing*
 - Recommendation – Approval
- b) Council Minutes – 09/17/2024*
 - Recommendation – Approval

Councilwoman Bega motioned to accept the Consent Agenda as amended regarding the minutes. Seconded by Councilman Davis. The motion carried.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

None

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

10)a) Christmas Parade FDOT Permit* with City Manager Williams stating annually, the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce puts on the Inverness Christmas Parade. The parade is scheduled for December 14, 2024 with staging for the parade commencing at 8:30am at Citrus High School and a scheduled start time of 12:00pm. The parade will begin on Hwy 44 near Dunkin Donuts, it will follow the highway toward downtown Inverness and end at Grace Street by Mama's Kuntry Kafe. The parade will then follow Grace Street to Highlands Blvd where it will turn right and end at the entrance to Citrus High School. As the local government, the City of Inverness must include a copy of the minutes from a meeting of the governing board to approve the City's hosting of the event. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to acknowledge and support the idea that FDOT Highway 44 (Main Street) will be temporarily closed to**

accommodate the annual Inverness Christmas Parade on Saturday December 14, 2024 from 11:00am until 2:00pm. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Motion carried.

10)b) City of Inverness Financial/Bond Ratings* with City Manager Williams stating on September 3rd, it was brought to Council that S&P Global had issued a Rate Action increasing the current City ratings. Both ratings have increased to an 'AA' status, noting that the City has credit strength caused by financial resilience and budgetary flexibility. Over the last several budget cycles the City has made impressive strides and accomplishments. Fitch notes individual ratings of credit factors used to determine the overall credit ratings and how the score comparatively to the local government rating portfolio. Finance Director Koter provided new information and details regarding the IDR rating and ICRA bond. The new information was Fitch ratings awarded the City AA rating and ICRA AA rating. ***No Action–Verbal Update***

10)c) Code Enforcement – Special Magistrate Agreement* with City Manager Williams stating on March 19, 2019, the City of Inverness transitioned to a special magistrate system for code enforcement case adjudication. The minimum qualifications for the Special Magistrate include one must be a member in good standing of the Florida Bar and shall have demonstrated adequate knowledge of the City Code of Ordinances and the Land Development Code, member of Code Enforcement Board or acted in the capacity of a Special Magistrate, and experience with municipalities of similar size as the City of Inverness. The position was advertised in August of 2024 and Mr. Robert Christensen applied and is well qualified to serve. Located in Homosassa, he has been providing legal services to clients throughout Citrus County since 1996. He is a former Assistant State Attorney and currently serves as the Code Enforcement General Magistrate for the City of Crystal River. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to approve the agreement with Robert C. Christensen to serve as the Special Magistrate for the City of Inverness Code Enforcement from October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025 as presented. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried.**

10)d) Committee and Board Appointments – Architectural and Aesthetic Review Committee* with City Manager Williams stating three existing members of the Architectural/Aesthetic Review Committee (AARC) recently expressed interest in serving for a new three-year term as a member of the Committee. Section 2.11(4) of the Inverness Land Development Code governs the purpose and membership of the AARC. The City Council appoints members to review and make recommendations concerning alteration of historic and archaeological properties in the Central Business District which has been established as an historic district. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to appoint Thomas Slaymaker, Laura Anstead and Kathy Thrumston to the Inverness Architectural and Aesthetic Review Committee for a three-year term to expire in September 2028. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried.**

10)e) Request for Lien Reduction – 510 Hudson* with City Manager Williams stating a complaint about high grass and weeds at 510 Hudson Street was reported to Code Enforcement in 2023. The violation was not abated, and the case moved forward to the Special Magistrate. An Administrative Order was issued on September 13, 2023, followed by a formal hearing on October 11, 2023. The final order directed a fine of \$150.00 per day until the property was brought into compliance. The violation was abated after 338 days with an accrued fine of \$50,700. Keith and Kevin Pisel are the current owners of the property and have requested a reduction in the fine and offered a payment of \$3,500 to release the lien. **Councilman Davis**

motioned to approve a Release of Lien in the amount of \$3,500 of the total amount due of \$50,700 for 510 Hudson Street as presented. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.

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

- Hurricane Helene did little damage to Inverness. Spoke of assistance to Crystal River as they will have a long recovery from the devastation. Noted the water level was higher than the No Name Storm years ago. Helene caused historic flooding in several states.
- Other included the change in garbage collection will start on October 14 where all garbage will be collected on the same day. The painted turtle unveiling has been postponed until November 1 at 5:30pm at the Courthouse and N. Apopka location. Highlighted upcoming events.

COUNCIL/MAYOR SUBJECTS

Councilwoman Bega thanked the audience for attending the meeting and questioned the Caveman event, which has been postponed until May 2025.

Mayor Plaisted thanked the audience for their comments and different opinion. Spoke of Cootertoiber not being demonic. Praised the Cootertoiber video. Noted various stores that sell Halloween. We live in a fantastic community.

Councilman McBride spoke of many children participating in the events during Cootertoiber. Felt the comment about the Mayor was out of place and spoke of both he and the Mayor's foundation of life. He will be attending the MPO meeting this Thursday.

Councilwoman Lizanich agreed with all of Council comments. Spoke of the budget and the possibility of a teen park facility and asked Council for support. City Manager Williams spoke of a possible feasibility study and suggested bringing this back as an agenda item in the future.

Councilman Davis spoke of spending 3 days in Ozello to assist with the devastation and helping the hurricane victims. He encouraged everyone to donate time, effort, money, anything to help.

Council President Hepfer thanked all who spoke this evening. She spoke of the upcoming events and noted the Witch Walk is sponsored by the Pine Street Pub. Families enjoy Cootertoiber and all the events, noting being an election year has brought more attention.

NON-SCHEDULED PUBLIC COMMENT

John Labriola asked for the return of the nativity scene for Christmas.

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

City Clerk

Council President