

April 15, 2025
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 Davis
Vice President Lizanich
Councilwoman Bega
Councilwoman Hepfer
Councilman Craig
Mayor Plaisted

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

The Invocation was given by Council President Davis and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by the City Council.

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Bega motioned to accept the Agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilman Craig. The motion carried.

PRE-SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS / WORKSHOP

None

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

Michael Puzino demonstrated bocce ball and requested a court in one of the parks.

Cheryl Bierer questioned the cost for each lot for the potential sewer project in the South Highlands. City Manager Williams stated there would have to be substantial funding required prior to project.

Steven Sidlovsky spoke of new Personhood resolution and recent events he attended.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

- Bill Listing*
 - Recommendation – Approval
- Council Minutes* – 04/01/2025
 - Recommendation - Approval
- Oak Ridge Cemetery – Burial Space Buyback*
 - Recommendation - Approval

Councilwoman Lizanich motioned to accept the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

None.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

10)a) Citrus County Tourism Presentation* with Florida law allows counties to impose local option transient rental taxes on rentals or leases of accommodations in hotels, motels, apartments, rooming houses, mobile home parks, RV parks, condominiums, or timeshare resorts for a term of six months or less. These taxes are generally used for tourism promotion and capital construction. Recognizing that the City of Inverness is a leading driver of visitation to Citrus County, it is important that periodic updates are provided to the City Council from the County's Tourism Division concerning the Tourism Development Council's initiatives and current City of Inverness visitation data. This is also an opportunity for Council discussion concerning the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in the relationship between the City and the County's tourism promotion efforts and to explore mutually beneficial capital construction project opportunities. Citrus County Tourism Director Auvis Cole provided a presentation and introduced Terry Natwick. Mayor Plaisted stated that "Discover Crystal River" should be "Discover Citrus County". Highlighted the marketing invested in by the City with no funding from any other entity. Spoke of concerns of TDC funding to others and not Inverness, as the City has demonstrated their success of promoting many events. Requested \$150,000 of TDC funds to use to grow tourism throughout the County. Mr. Cole spoke of the idea of strategies and the process, and how the Discover Crystal River logo also promotes Inverness. Appreciated the feedback and comments and is excited about the future and a strategic plan. Councilman Craig spoke of the strategic plan and what the numbers revealed by the consultant will show, weaknesses and strengths. Questioned how businesses can participate in the Threshold 360. Mr. Cole spoke of the effects of the hurricanes last year and changes in tourism regarding hotels, etc. Highlighted occupancy percentages. Councilwoman Hepfer stated she did not receive an email to complete a survey with Mr. Cole stating that it will be resent as the feedback is important. President Davis questioned how much tax money does the TDC receive in total and how the data is quantified to the Westside, due to lack of hotels on the Eastside. City Manager Williams spoke of the \$3M tax funds with Inverness at 5%, yet no funding from the TDC to the City. Spoke of the investment of \$16M in the Depot District and the potential RV park at Whispering Pines Park. Mr. Cole stated he is committed to work on a path forward and conversations are needed between the two entities. He liked that the RV park would promote sports tourism. Asked about the capital projects the TDC had provided funds to, and he stated the Crystal River Riverwalk received \$500,000 of the TDC funds.

10)b) Parks Amenities Assessment and Study* with City Manager Williams asked Parks Director Worley to the podium. Parks Director Worley stated an assessment and study commenced to ensure that resources are allocated and informed decisions made for future planning within the Park's System. Liberty and Wallace Brooks Parks see a lot of usage but not many options for the youth, mainly middle school age and teenagers, causing them to find alternative ways to occupy their time that often is not positive to the parks system. Whispering Pines Park is outdated, and several facilities need replacement. Kirsten Siegel, of the Wantman Group, Inc (WGI) provided a study which focused on existing park amenities throughout the City and provided general recommendations on park improvements

aiming at a variety of activities for the community with a focus on the City's youth. Mayor Plaisted spoke of possibly removing the shuffleboard courts at Wallace Brooks Park and replace them with pickleball. Suggested old fashioned activities such as badminton, croquet, etc. Questioned the insurance regarding skate parks with City Manager citing a change in legislation. Councilwoman Lizanich stated she liked the skate park and basketball concept. Councilwoman Bega thought the skate park and basketball were good and the fitness equipment was a good fit. Councilman Craig liked the skate park at Wallace Brooks Park and the splash pad expansion in Whispering Pines Park. Noted exercise equipment is a mainstay in parks. Councilwoman Hepfer loved the idea of a skate park and basketball and spoke of pickleball and splash pad. President Davis would like to focus on removal of racquetball structure for pickleball. Noted basketball courts are needed in the downtown parks. Council consensus was to focus on the recommendations for the development of next fiscal year's CIP.

10)c) Ordinance 2025-845 City Stormwater Management Update – First Reading* with City Manager Williams asking Assistant City Manager Calascione to present. Assistant City Manager Calascione stated the City completed its Stormwater Master Plan and over the last few months has been working with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to update management practices and recordkeeping. This evening, Council will consider the first reading of an ordinance that includes language covering inspections and monitoring, consistent with FDEP guidance. Councilwoman Bega questioned if this included DRAs as they are governed by SWFWMD, and if there would be fees. It was stated there would be no fees involved. **Councilwoman Hepfer motioned to have the Clerk read Ordinance 2025-845 by Title only. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.**

ORDINANCE 2025- 845

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 19 OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BY ADDING SECTION 19-11 ENTITLED INSPECTIONS AND MONITORING FOR COMPLIANCE; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND INTERPRETING THIS ORDINANCE; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION INTO THE CODE AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Councilwoman Hepfer motioned to approve Ordinance 2025-845 by rollcall vote on a first reading. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilwoman Hepfer, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman Craig, yes; and President Davis, yes. The motion carried.

10)d) City Garden - IFAS/UF Extension Service Proposal* with City Manager Williams asking Parks Director Worley to make the presentation. Director Worley provided history of the City Garden, was completed in 2018 at a cost of \$289,655 (not including property acquisition) with the intention of having a partnering non-profit acting as the garden manager, overseeing the daily operations and the educational programs of the facility, which failed. City had a plan to rent out bed space to offset the cost of managing the garden which cost to the City was nearly \$21,000 annually, with approximately \$2,000 in revenues from rentals. In 2020, the Key Training Center wished to manage the garden, restore the 22 garden beds for growing

produce, maintain the entire garden area, and use the garden as an education tool for its clients. This partnership excelled for four years, and the Key Training Center saw tremendous results/benefits for its clients and the community. In January 2025, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Key Training Center had to relocate their Inverness facility to their main branch in Lecanto and was no longer able to manage the daily operations of the garden. Director Worley provided detail of the proposal from where representatives of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Services put together a plan to manage the garden, maintain the entire area, use the garden as an educational tool for the community by way of free classes, and engage with local schools for educational opportunities as well. A use permit would be for one year and provides a pathway to growing the City Garden program into the future. President Davis suggested a year-end review of this to see if it is beneficial. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to approve issuing a use permit to the UF/IFAS Extension Services for the usage of the City Garden as presented. Seconded by Councilwoman Hepfer. The motion carried.**

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

- CRA Bill looks to be postponed in the House. Spoke of the importance of CRAs for cities.
- Liberty Boardwalk Update would need to spend \$8,000-\$9,000 to develop a plan that had been previously discussed on State property.
- Eden Dr. and 41S Sewer Main and spoke of recent and past damage created by drilling companies. FDOT has provided information regarding permits. The repair will cost approx. \$40,000 and it is an emergency status.
- Other with City Manager referencing July 3 and changing the format to bring tribute bands to provide entertainment. Any extra funds will go toward the additional Small Town Saturday Night events. Noted this last event was a record crowd.

COUNCIL/MAYOR SUBJECTS

Mayor Plaisted announced the National Day of Prayer on May 1 at the Depot Pavilion. Small Town Saturday Night was terrific, and it will be great to have 2 events for each quarter of the year.

Councilwoman Bega spoke of the perfect weather for Saturday's concert. Would like to resurrect the historic stories there were done in the past, maybe once a month for approx. 5 minutes.

Councilwoman Hepfer thought the overhead shot of the crowd at Saturday's event was amazing with the number of people attending. People are thrilled with what the City is doing.

Councilwoman Lizanich spoke of an upcoming CCCCCF meeting. Thanked staff and audience.

Councilman Craig stated he really had a great time with the Key Training clients on their field trip to the Inverness Government Center.

Council President Davis thanked the audience and staff. Provided a short story regarding history and the very first ice machine in the City. Saturday's event was unbelievable.

CITIZENS NOT ON AGENDA

Max Schulman spoke of the TDC, and the great representation Councilwoman Hepfer had done in the past. Suggested City consider joining in being a Partner in Tourism. Spoke of off-road biking possibility in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

City Clerk

Council President