

August 6, 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 Councilman Davis 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 Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.

PRE-SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

4)a) Congressman Gus Bilirakis spoke of the City's July 3 event he attended. He addressed Federal funding that has been brought successfully to this area. Being a part of helping with infrastructure is very important. Spoke of the Ladder Truck for the fire department being in the House budget. Eager to hold future Town Hall meetings. Mayor Plaisted presented Congressman with a Cooter Kudo expressing the City's appreciation for his support and assistance with funding of \$1.2M for a Master Lift Station, \$800,000 to purchase a ladder truck for the Fire Department, and how the City values the relationship.

4)b) Inverness Fire Department – Training Facility Update with Chief Bessler thanking Congressman Bilirakis for the support and assistance regarding the future ladder truck. He provided aspects of history of the Inverness Fire Department and provided details of the training facility located off Pleasant Grove Road near the Public Works complex. Noted that most of the work done at the site has been inhouse. Completion date targeted is October 1, 2024. Spoke of the project's benefits and how the ladder truck will help the ISO rating. Council President Hepfer compared the cost of prefabricated training facility - \$400,000 - \$500,000 to the City's actual cost of approx. \$90,000. Councilman Davis complimented the resourcefulness and a great job. City Manager Williams explained the ISO rating system. Councilman McBride appreciated all the IFD has done. Mayor Plaisted thanked the Chief and all he does and his department.

PUBLIC HEARINGS / WORKSHOP

None

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

Debbie Wheatley of Inverness spoke of the sample ballot she received and the confusion of the referendum verbiage. Anna Loughridge again appeared before Council regarding Amendment 4 and the No to 4 organization. Spoke of other governments passing resolutions. Dale Gilliam-Saunders spoke about the libraries and banned books with Council President Hepfer clarifying the libraries are under the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners jurisdiction. Councilwoman Lizanich stated she is the City's representative on the library governing board and has been reviewing a list of questionable books. Karen Esty reported on the recent MPO CAC meeting regarding transportation funding by the State and Federal. Noted long range transportation study, priority list, etc. She asked the City Attorney to clarify the referendum language with City Attorney Hartley providing a detailed explanation. George Schmalstig spoke as President of the United Way of Citrus County and provided detailed highlights of last year 's weather issues, assistance given, etc. He reassured that the United Way is here for the East side of the county as well. Spoke of using 211 for various information, requests for services received, and how United Way gave grants of approx. \$245,000. Spoke of many programs and services. The following attendees spoke of Amendment 4 opposition and adopting a resolution by the City – Stephanie Bell, Paul Loughridge, April Wnuk, Mary Seader, Sharon McDonald, John Labriola, Brian Sullivan, and Steve Jones.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

- a) Bill Listing*
 - Recommendation – Approval
- b) Council Minutes – 07/16/2024*
 - Recommendation – Approval

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

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

None

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

10)a) Interlocal Agreement for Solid Waste Disposal – Renewal* with City Manager Williams stating the City and County have a mutually beneficial relationship for use of the County landfill for the City's solid waste garbage disposal. The initial agreement executed on January 7, 2020, must be renewed annually to maintain the current relationship. The FY2023-2024 agreement renewal increased the contract rates to \$40.00 per ton. This year's renewal price is an increase of \$4.00 per ton applied to both roll off containers and covered secured loads. The total price per ton is \$44.00 for both roll off containers and covered secured loads under the revised agreement, which equates to a 10% increase. The uncontained waste surcharge remains unchanged at \$10.00 minimum charge plus \$10.00 per ton. This agreement and rates therein would become effective October 1, 2024. **Councilman Davis motioned to approve the Interlocal Agreement for FY 2024-25 with Citrus County for Solid Waste Disposal at the County Landfill and authorize the Council President to execute the document. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried.**

10)b) Commercial Sanitation Rate – FY 2025* with City Manager Williams stating the City has an excellent solid waste program that includes yard waste, bulk items, and single stream recycling for residents. Rates are annually adjusted, and the City must additionally adjust rates for the commercial dumpster program. Rate adjustments are made on an annual basis as part of the Franchise Agreement for Solid Waste Collection Services in the City, and to correspond to the change in the Consumer Price Index and in accordance with the Franchise Agreement a 5% increase has been applied per these terms. Rates will become effective October 1, 2024. *Verbal Update – No action required.*

10)c) Ordinance 2024-832 Utility Fees and Charges – First Reading* with City Manager Williams stating an updated rate study for the City's water and wastewater utility was presented at the June 18 Council meeting to look at user fees and charges necessary to operate and maintain the system for the next five years. This ordinance will include revised costs of meter installations based on current prices for meters and supplies, as well as clarify the deposits and fees to be incurred when establishing services. The adjustments are to be implemented by the FY 2025 budget. **Councilman McBride motioned to have the Clerk read Ordinance 2024-832 by Title only. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried.**

ORDINANCE 2024- 832

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION 22-91 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED CAPACITY CHARGES TO INCLUDE A NEW FEE SCHEDULE; AMENDING SECTION 22- 92 OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED DEPOSITS; RETURN OF DEPOSITS; AND SERVICES WITHOUT DEPOSIT FOR CERTAIN CUSTOMERS TO ADD CLARIFICATION OF THE PROCESS FOR DETERMINING, COLLECTING, AND REFUNDING DEPOSITS; AMENDING SECTION 22-93 OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED PAYMENT OF FEES AND BILLS REQUIRED TO ADD CLARIFICATION ON PENALTIES AND FEES ASSOCIATED WITH PAYMENT OF BILLS; AMENDING SECTION 22-98 OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED BASIC RATE SCHEDULE FOR POTABLE WATER, SEWER AND RECLAIMED WATER SERVICE TO INCLUDE A NEW RATE SCHEDULE; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND INTERPRETING THIS ORDINANCE; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION INTO THE CODE AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Councilwoman Bega motioned to approve Ordinance 2024-832 by roll-call vote on a first reading. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman McBride, yes; Councilman Davis, yes; and President Hepfer, yes. The motion carried.

10)d) Landscape Maintenance RFP 2024-02 DPW & Oak Ridge Cemetery* with City Manager Williams stating The City released a Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding the Oak Ridge Cemetery and 48 city owned properties (satellite parks, drainage retention areas, lots, certain medians, and utility facilities) for landscape and mowing services. Sealed bids were received and read aloud on July 19, 2024 which included: Oak Ridge Cemetery submittals from Lawn Enforcement Agency - \$69,768.00 and EarthScapes Unlimited, Inc. - \$122,958.00. Landscape Management for City owned properties submittals from Lawn Enforcement

Agency - \$90,876.00 and EarthScapes Unlimited, Inc. - \$137,302.67. Based on the FY 2025 proposed budget of \$139,000, which includes an increase from the current contracted services. It is recommended that Council reject all bids as the minimum total bid of **\$160,644.00** significantly exceeds the proposed budget and consider providing consensus direction to have the maintenance services performed by City staff versus a contractor. Councilman McBride questioned hiring additional staff and equipment with City Manager stating this will fit in the budget. **Councilman McBride motioned to reject all bids for Landscape Management and Oak Ridge Cemetery lawn maintenance and have the needed landscape maintenance service from the RFP be performed by City staff vs a contractor for the FY 2025. Seconded by Councilman Davis. The motion carried.**

10)e) Downtown Landscape Architectural Services Proposal* with City Manager Williams stating it has been many years since the first streetscape CDBG projects took shape in the historic downtown. These successful endeavors reshaped the town and brought about much energy and investment. However, the landscaping is due for a much-needed update/redesign. Staff have been working in conjunction with the County to develop a new landscaping approach for the downtown to include the Historic Courthouse Grounds to improve the appearance with a blended and coordinated theme. General Project Locations include: North Pine Avenue (between SR 44 / US 41 & Tompkins); West Main Street (between North Pine Avenue and Courthouse Square); Courthouse Square (within road rights of way); City of Inverness Signage (area near south corner of Courthouse Square); Cooter Turtle Art Project Locations; and Courthouse Square (green space surrounding Historic Courthouse). Mr. Paul Gibbs, Landscape Architect, Community Land Design, Inc (CLD) submitted a proposal for professional design fees totaling \$31,500 with a proposed cost share of \$24,500 for the City and \$7,000 from Citrus County. There are two additional projects moving forward to further improve the appearance of the downtown with the installation of 28 colored lighting fixtures and installation of seven (7) artist painted aluminum cooter turtles in the downtown area. Councilwoman Bega spoke of Paul Gibbs serving on City boards in the past and his passion. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to approve the proposal from Community Land Design, Inc. as presented and authorize the City Manager to execute the document. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.**

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

- FY 2025 Budget Development using the lowered millage at 7.66 from 7.76 and explained the overall effects at approx. \$80,000. Councilwoman Lizanich questioned this being changed in the future and felt it best to keep 7.76 as is with no decrease. Councilman McBride spoke of increased values, Ad Valorem taxes, operating the City, etc. Agreed with the decrease. City Manager spoke of the millage rate historically. **Council consensus was to proceed with developing the budget using 7.66.**
- Jeep Appreciation Event had 200 Jeeps downtown and the downtown businesses was very happy.
- Other included Hurricane Debby and spoke of the reason to declare a State of Emergency in these events. Cootertober is just around the corner. Will be great.

COUNCIL/MAYOR SUBJECTS

Mayor Plaisted thanked the speakers and the important issues. Stated he has been involved in Right to Life for many, many years. Spoke of beliefs and suggested support to opposing Amendment 4 as it could impact the State for years to come.

Councilman McBride stated this is a difficult issue in more than one way. Spoke of Pro-Life and spoke to ways to express the issue. He was not in favor of the City adopting a Resolution. Would support ways to clarify the amendment language and additional public information.

Councilwoman Bega agreed with Councilman McBride. This issue is an individual's decision and not for Council to push onto the public.

Councilwoman Lizanich agreed with Councilwoman Bega that the City should not put their beliefs on the public. Will address the Amendment on the ballot. She reported on the recent Citrus County Community Charitable Foundation (CCCCF) meeting and attended her first meeting of the Library Governing Board. Praised the recent play at the Valerie Theatre.

Councilman Davis stated he is Pro-Life, but the Council represents all of the community and to make decisions to run the City. Agreed with Councilman McBride regarding exposure of the issue. He recently attended the Hernando-Citrus MPO meeting in Councilman McBride's stead. Spoke of statistics that were discussed and the 25-year period moving forward. Stated Karen Esty is part of the pulse regarding the MPO and transportation issues. Spoke of projects in Citrus and Hernando counties in the future.

President Hepfer did not feel this issue was part of the City. It is bad legislation. Stated for the last 3 meetings beliefs were stated and felt the Council had made a public statement. Changed subject and referenced the full budget workshop on July 16th, with a lot of great information and discussion as we looked to the fiscal year 2025. Staff presented a balanced approach, including previously discussed pay adjustments to the compensation program for our City staff. These adjustments did not, however include our charter officers, the City Manager and the City Clerk. Council gave consensus to have the Council President review and discuss a similar compensation for the Manager and the Clerk. She met with both parties, and presented the mutually agreed upon adjustments to the City Manager and the City Clerk's compensations. Keeping in mind the 8.7% operational cost increase associated with the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 budget, I would recommend that both Charter officers have their respective pay adjusted by the 8.7%, effective upon approval. This increase is equitable to the City's economic environment, affordable, and sustainable within the desire to lower the millage from 7.76 to 7.66 mils. Council appreciated the hard work and dedication of our City Manager and our City Clerk, and feel this increase is well earned and deserved. City Manager's adjusted annual compensation will be \$149,915, and the City Clerk's will be \$88,087 with a current fiscal year impact of \$5,447. Also contracts for both the Manager and the Clerk will be amended to be congruent with the City's updated consolidated leave policy for all staff and will only affect the Clerk's total balance to receive 3 additional days of consolidated leave. Councilwoman Bega was glad this was done. Noted the positions are individual and should be considered on certain aspects of the position. City Manager Williams explained recent staff increases, market conditions, etc. yet this is a Council decision. Stated it was awkward to discuss publicly and assured the increases were affordable. Councilman Davis appreciated Councilwoman Bega's comments. Feels it is fair across the board. The City has a great workforce that is dedicated. **Councilman Davis**

motioned to approve the Charter Officers compensation adjustments as presented and authorize the Council President to execute the contract amendments for the City Manager and City Clerk. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried.

CITIZENS NOT ON AGENDA

Anna Loughridge thanked Council and praised the conduct of this Council's meetings being welcoming and professional. Stated she agrees with educating the public. Spoke of personal experience and her family.

Debbie Wheatley thanked everyone and appreciated the statements made. Happy to hear everyone's thoughts.

Mayor Plaisted stated this is not a religious issue it is about life and death.

Meeting adjourned at 7:41p.m.

City Clerk

Council President