

July 7<sup>th</sup> , 2015  
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 Ryan  
Councilwoman Bega  
Councilman McBride  
Councilman Hinkle  
Mayor Plaisted (Not Present)

Also present were City Manager DiGiovanni, City Attorney Haag, Asst. City Manager Williams, Community Development Director Malm, Finance Director Chiodo, Personnel Director Densmore and City Clerk Davis.

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

#### **ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

Council President Hepfer asked that council approve an addition to the Acceptance of the Agenda, with the addition of an Appointment to the ZBA under the City Manager Report. **Councilman Ryan motioned to accept the Agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motioned carried.**

#### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

None

#### **OPEN PUBLIC MEETING**

Sheila Scanlan, 503 Hunting Lodge Dr addressed Council. She and her husband live and own several properties in Inverness and had concern of not enough protection and training, with a new Fire Department. Understands it to be a partial volunteer which may change the rating of local fire service and insurance may go up. Can't see how City can afford a Fire Department.

Ken Clack, 1124 Woodcrest Ave addressed Council, advising how he & his wife have been residents for 19 years. He stated that the issue of Fire Department worries him and hope they will look at this situation before us. He would hate to have to depend on Dunnellon for a back up, and asked they take a re-vote & stay with county.

Karen Esty, 2409 Wilson Street addressed City Council regarding the Fire Dept. and noted news article in Chronicle, and spoke to calculations and costs for salaries and equipment, etc. There are a lot of unanswered questions, causing her concern with the budget and millage rate having to go up to compensate for this. She spoke to the salaries mentioned with regard to the Fire Chief, as well as additional staff, and volunteers, as well as the expense for equipment and supplies. She hopes that we have done due diligence with the money and

maybe should reconsider. She asked if the CRA plays any part in this with the funding of the Fire Fighting.

Bud Osborne, Inverness addressed Council and questioned if there was a kitchen fire at his house, where will the fire truck come, having concern it to be as far as Kensington or Anna Jo, which is much farther away than the Inverness station.

Elizabeth Collins, 525 Tina Ave, Inverness requests that Council reconsider before they make it a done deal. Concerned that this was not well thought out and the cost to taxpayers. Feels the people have elected the City Council, and are not being heard.

John Pepe, 403 Deer Run, Inverness addressed Council stating that he helped start the Highland Volunteer Fire Dept. and used a rebuilt 1946 Mack Truck, as the City wouldn't go out of the city limits without a charge, and spoke to the history. He is not for giving authority to the County, but things have changed since the volunteers in the past, and spoke to the commitment that a volunteer needs. He questioned if we will have back up, and spoke to insurance rates. He stated that the County is doing a good job and this is a big overtaking for the city.

George Gouldbourn , Huntinglodge Dr. addressed stating how they have integrity, unlike the County and can't trust them. Suggest they go ahead with Fire Dept.

Frank Sinkusky, 1102 Trail Ridge Ave. questioned various buildings and if we would have equipment to handle fire calls. For fee of \$54 a year, it doesn't justify us getting involved with this.

Sophia Diaz Fonseca spoke to cost of the MSBU to the Masonic business center and the Pine Avenue business center. She questioned the cost in taxes to fund a brand-new municipal fire department. She doesn't believe the Inverness business owners should be forced into this experiment until they are guaranteed they will pay less taxes for the same level of service the County now provides. She strongly urges Council to rethink the path they are on. Next will be a municipal police dept. and cost that will entail.

Linda Smith, 112 Woodcrest Ave. questioned why we would want to go backward on such an important issue. Move forward and keep the MSBU.

### **SCHEDULED APPEARANCES**

None

### **MAYOR'S LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

None

### **CITY ATTORNEY REPORT**

None

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a) Bill Listing\*
  - Recommendation – Approval
- b) Council Minutes –06/02/15; 06/11/15; 06/16/15; 06/22/15\*
  - Recommendation – Approval

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

## **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

**10)a) Appointment to Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)** was addressed by City Manager DiGiovanni. He advised that the board is currently having difficulty functioning due to lack of volunteer members. An application was submitted by Bob Bessler, owner of Seventh Heaven Salon on Tompkins Street well known in the community, and would like to be appointed to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). It is recommended that City Council provides consideration, knowing it is a voluntary scope.

**Councilwoman Bega motioned to appoint Bob Bessler as a volunteer member to the City Zoning Board of Adjustment to a four year term. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried unanimously.**

**10)a) Tentative Millage Rate** was addressed by City Manager DiGiovanni who explained that our goal is to present a City-Wide Appropriation that is balanced, service oriented, and project driven. We have recommended over the last few years that we come forward with a tentative millage rate that we know can be maintained and adopted by Council. He advised that the State of Florida defines a tax increase as any revenue increase to the government. What is recommended by staff is to hold the tax rate exactly as it exists as we continue building the budget, and we will be ready to make a presentation in August. We must align the budget with the expanded CRA, Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and maintain service levels. The City's contribution to the CRA will be roughly \$481,482k moving into this year, with the County contributing the same, and the CRA contribution by the two governments will total \$963,540k, and used to plan and improve the CRA. City Manager DiGiovanni explained how the CRA is funded and how the funds are utilized in the CRA area only and creates an environment for business to move to the city and enhance current businesses. The expanded CRA will absorb 95% of the Hospitals taxable amount, with County Government being obligated to make a contribution into the CRA as well, up to the established millage rate valuation for the Hospital. The County will receive whatever valuation they levy in millage rate. We are making this presentation with the highest degree of seriousness, due to years of planning and investment to get to this point of the CRA's needs and expansion. The increase in revenues to the City are mostly coming from the Hospital and its surrounding properties coming on the tax rolls. For this community to benefit, and for the planning to begin and carry forward for the next 28-30 years, staff is recommending that you adopt the tentative millage, at the current millage rate, which will require a unanimous vote of the Council.

**Councilman Ryan motioned to adopt the Tentative Millage Rate of 6.9949 mills. Seconded by Councilman McBride. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Councilwoman Hepfer publicly announced the location of the two Public Hearing for budget adoption to be:** Thursday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 @ 5:01pm  
Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 @ 5:01pm

To be held at the Inverness Government Center, City Council Chambers, 212 W Main Street, Inverness, FL 34450.

**10) b) Inverness Golf and Country Club – Water Rates** was addressed. City Manager DiGiovanni advised that the City enacted a Bulk Reclaimed Water Agreement with the Inverness Golf and Country Club (IGCC), in February 2011. The current rate is \$0.35 per 1,000 gallons. The reclaimed water agreement provided for a review of charges at the conclusion of the 4<sup>th</sup> year to determine if an adjustment is required. After review of the electric costs to operate irrigation wells from 2006 – 2011, (prior to using reclaimed water), it was found that the cost to operate the wells demonstrates that the costs of reclaimed water is over-priced and warrants a reduction. Analysis favors a per thousand gallon rate of \$0.25/1,000 gallons, which will average an annual cost to the IGCC of \$18,513.84 or \$1,542.82/month. With Council support, we will adjust the rate annually, commencing October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 and modify the document. The only current customer is the Inverness Golf & Country Club. He noted that infrastructure is in the ground for reclaimed water to be available for Holden Park, and will look into why that has not materialized.

**Councilman McBride motioned to approve amending the Bulk Reclaimed Water Agreement with the Inverness Golf and Country Club to \$0.25 per thousand, and modify language as presented. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried unanimously.**

**10)c) Fire Department Transition Timeline** was addressed. City Manager DiGiovanni spoke to the development of a Fire Services Unit within the City of Inverness and noted correspondence in the agenda packet explaining the methodology moving forward. Discussions with City of Dunnellon, which included the City of Crystal River early on, has been collaborative. Agreements and Memorandum of Understandings will be discussed moving forward, with both staff. As far as taking information and shaping it to create an impression, has been occurring by the newspaper. The discussions up to this point were to enable Council to provide optional information to consider. We did not build a fully executable document with any other government to this point, and are moving in that direction. We must first finalize budget figures for fire services, as well as sanitation, cost of policing, Parks, Road Maintenance, etc. and they are still being compiled as we move forward. The budget information you will receive will contain line items, budget figures, and everything for them to make an informed, educated, adoptable vote for the budget. We couldn't compile all this information until we had a clear understanding of the direction of City Council. Will be visiting with City of Dunnellon tomorrow, working through the Manager, and speaking with convened Council at their workshop. There has been a long history of these two governments working together and has always understood that working together and sharing cost, was a good thing. Wanted to put information in agenda to have an understanding on what needs to incrementally be done to get us to the point of finalizing all the details. The previous figures provided were actually generous, as to what we envision being able to procure and what we envision sitting down with counterparts in County Government re; the 1974 District Tax, City's Fire Dept. Building, and equipment and equity in the equipment through that Fire District. The 1974 Tax Initiative involved the new development (Beverly Hills) which was coming on line and County Government worked with the Inverness City Officials on the approach of the Fire District Tax. The District was

originally developed to fund 11 different volunteer departments and the tax was to support the volunteer efforts.

Councilman McBride stated that at our last meeting when Council voting to develop its own Fire Department, he did not anticipate that. He suggested that through consensus of this Council, that we direct the City Manager to have a reconvening of issue regarding Fire Services for the City, with the intent of developing a contract, as previously outlined, with the County. He doesn't feel this is a wise thing to do and we are stretching too far, and not representing our citizens well.

Councilwoman Bega stated how she has been wavering and has seriously been considering both sides. She initially thought we could not take on such a huge task and after further consideration and workshops with Dunnellon, and now feels that initiating our own fire Department is a very strong possibility, and positive move forward. With the history of interlocal agreements, trying to collect funds from the County, additional payment to Sheriff on top of the ad valorem tax, and additional annual fees for our services, there is no end to where those charges will go. She noted an additional tax for the acute care services (Life services). She stated that we need control and the City is fiscally conservative in the managing of the tax dollars of our residents and business, and feels we will move forward and be conservative.

Councilman Hinkle stated that looking over the information provided over the past two years, initially we were giving the alternative coming on with the County or hit the Hwy. He spoke to lack of negotiating with the County with the MSBU, which would cost the residents \$54, but the businesses would be much more and they kept coming up with different numbers, and now they are coming up with a new tax – MSTU. They are going to do away with the 1974 Fire Tax which would increase our millage rate in Inverness. He noted concern with how they were talking about building the Inverness Fire Dept. somewhere else. Currently, the Inverness Fire Department covers this side of the county, and when called out for a fire, the back-up would have to come from elsewhere. He was still in favor of having own FD

Councilman Ryan stated that he agreed that we need our own Fire Department. He spoke to the MSBU cost to businesses (5 cents/sq.ft). The \$54 could go up to \$113 and there is no time limit on it. They are now coming up with MSTU on top of the taxes that we are already paying. He didn't think that we need to have somebody who is not in control of their money, managing our Fire Department and our money and therefore am in favor of going with our own Fire Depart. We need control in the future.

President Hepfer stated that she didn't think we are ready and have a lot of uncertainty with the Valerie Theatre still ahead. She spoke to friends that live in Dunnellon who advised that things aren't working out well with their Police Dept. and having their own MSBU to fund fire. She stated that no one here has run a Fire Dept. and questioned who we would bring in to run it. She wanted to stay on record as saying no to the Fire Dept.

City Manager DiGiovanni stated that we will be bring more detailed information forward and more clarification.

**10) d) Budget Development Schedule Modification** was addressed by City Manager DiGiovanni who explained that due to complexities of an expanded Community Redevelopment District, the addition of a Fire Service Unit and recent fiscal data by the of Property Appraiser, requires that more time is needed to bring the document to

conclusion. The following changes are proposed for your support to the adopted Budget Development Schedule: Change the City Wide Budget Presentation Workshop **from Thursday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> to Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30pm** and change the If Necessary City Wide Budget Presentation Workshop from **Tuesday, July 28<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm.**

**Councilman Hinkle motioned to modify the Budget Schedule as presented to eliminate the date of July 23<sup>rd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and add the Workshop Dates of August 11<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015, from Thursday July 23<sup>rd</sup> to Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 pm. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega . The motion carried unanimously.**

**10) e) Zephyr Street Project** was addressed by City Manager DiGiovanni, who updated Council on the Project. The City was awarded a 50 percent cost share through the Florida Department of Transportation's County Incentive Grant Program (CIGP), to fund improvements, which include focusing on safety traffic calming, roadway surfacing, aesthetics, drainage system improvements to alleviate flooding concerns, and ROW recovery along the portion between Seminole Ave and Ella Ave (Turner Camp). Zephyr Street has section that experience encroachment by chattels and real property which are detriment to the drainage system and cause safety concerns. Future discussion with City Council will be to gain an understanding and achieve clarity of the necessary steps to bring the project forward. We will work with affected property owners to convey an understanding of the project, achieve support and compliance. He noted that at the next meeting of City Council, we will present the project scope for the neighborhood to participate in public discussion.

He presented overhead of Zephyr Street area, which showed implementations of roundabouts in several areas of the project, and noted encroachment issues in several areas. Traffic Calming will also be introduced to intersections along the project.

**No action needed.**

City Manager DiGiovanni additionally reported on the following:

- Denise Dix to speak to Council regarding the Suncoast Parkway on July 21.
- The Patriotic Evening Fireworks on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, the weather was so violent he thought it would take out the event regarding power outages and water damage to equipment. Fortunately with all the damages, the weather cleared by 6:30 and we went forward with the crowd being enormous. It's a proud moment to market the community and do it in such a patriotic theme.
- Moving forward, he hopes that everyone understands that we have a reputation and a history of bringing forward meaningful information. And that is a commitment and a promise that will happen with the city budget.

It is City Council's responsibility to set service levels and based on the workshops up to this point it is clear what is wanted and is being worked. The only addition is fire services, which we will add and make very clear moving forward.

### **COUNCIL/MAYOR SUBJECTS**

Councilwoman Bega stated the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July was spectacular and watched from their boat, and crowd was enormous. With regard to the Fire Service issue, even though Council doesn't agree on everything, we will move forward in a civil way.

Councilman Hinkle appreciates citizen's confidence in what we do, and spoke of how the city is debt free. Unfortunately, the newspaper doesn't report all the facts. The rumor mill is incredible and we would not do anything to hurt our citizens. Spoke to Fire Dept. and EMS, and how the Sheriff's Department took over the fire department and the large increase in their budget. The County has shown irresponsibility through the years with keeping up with their equipment. He spoke to the many city events and projects. We are looking at the best options for our community.

Councilman McBride had no comment on the Fire Department issue. He spoke to the Patriotic Evening as a slice of Americana and thanked staff for the event. He also thanked the Sheriff Dept. and how well it was structured in the traffic control.

Councilman Ryan commented on crowd at this evening's meeting. Patriotic Evening fireworks were wonderful, and how the traffic was well handled. Spoke to the Chronicle and responsible journalism is a public trust. He doesn't think the Chronicle is honoring that trust as anything negative, they publish & anything positive is put on the back burner. It was good to hear opinions from Inverness with regard to the Fire issue. Hard to believe the county citizens aren't upset with how the county spends their money, as they are about what we are trying to do to improve it.

Council President Hepfer will move forward and is proud to serve this community. Spoke to July 3<sup>rd</sup> and all the great comments.

#### **CITIZENS NOT ON AGENDA**

Pat Clack, 1124 Woodcrest Ave., spoke with regard to not trusting County and State governments. This is the first time hearing about the vote with Councilwoman Bega changing her vote. Took it personally that it wasn't the way the City should be.

Bud Osborne, Inverness with Sertoma spoke with regard to their club that raises funds for speech and hearing issues. He stated the clubs in this county have raised over a million dollars and it all stays here. The club worked the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July event, which was successful but questioned that the concessions are non-profit, but there were many private-for-profit and like to consider this strictly for non-profit setup.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:03pm

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**City Clerk**

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**Council President**