

October 6th, 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

Also present were City Manager DiGiovanni, City Attorney Haag, Asst. City Manager Williams, Community Development Director Day, Project Director Malm, Finance Event Director Skeele-Hogan and City Clerk Davis.

The Invocation was given by Councilman Hinkle 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 Ryan. The motioned carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

None

SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

6)a) Crystal River Aquarium – Art Jones, Representative made a power point presentation to City Council on the proposed Aquarium to be constructed in Crystal River, with the estimated completion in 2020. He spoke to the benefit the Aquarium would bring to Crystal River, as well as the entire County to include Inverness. The Aquarium would provide Education, Manatee and Dolphin Rehabilitation, Environmental Protection and Awareness, Tourism and Economic Opportunities, and help with sustainability of One Rake at a Time project.

MAYOR'S LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

None

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

a) Bill Listing*

- Recommendation – Approval
- b) Council Minutes – 09/14/15PH; 09/15/15; 09/29/15PH*
 - Recommendation – Approval
- c) Proclamation – Red Ribbon Week*
 - Recommendation – Approval
- d) National American Indian Heritage Month*
 - Recommendation - Approval
- e) Cemetery Lot Repurchase – Lot 347 & N1/2 of Lot 348, SW Addition*
 - Recommendation - Approval
- f) Surplus Property Disposal*
 - Recommendation – Approval

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

CITY MANAGER’S REPORT

10)a) Merry Building Property Lease was addressed by City Manager DiGiovanni who explained how Winston Perry, owner of the Merry Building which connects to the Valerie Theatre, has had a vision for the Merry Building that would bring roof top dining to the downtown. City staff at several levels of expertise discussed the concept and assisted in evaluation to what it would take to make this a reality. He explained the difficulties with the construction itself, to the movement of people, and the needed improvements to the building infrastructure which would be necessary. The building is Historic and requires approval of the AARC to secure a permit.

Winston Perry addressed City Council, speaking to the history of the Valerie Theatre, the prior owners David Skipper and himself, and the positive changes to Inverness over the past 20 years. He spoke to the purchase of business properties by himself through the years, such as the Valerie Theatre and several buildings surrounding (to include the Merry Bldg). Prior to reconstruction of the Valerie Theatre, he thought of placing a roof top restaurant and renting it out, and the 4 feet of property around the building which could be a walkway to the top. He stated there was a brick wall built around the building during the re-construction of the Valerie Theatre that was on his property (the 4 feet section of his property), and spoke to the Lease Agreement drawn up for the easement around the building, \$1,000/mo. for five years, for the 4 feet strip of property the City was utilizing.

City Manager DiGiovanni noted that the stem walls were installed as camouflage for air-conditioning/storage, etc. He noted that the wall along the left side could be moved for a walkway, and spoke to underground utility improvements. To keep the plaza project intact, will require that City Council accept the enclosed lease for roughly a 4’ strip that surrounds the Merry Building. The term and conditions would be calculated at \$1000 monthly, \$12,000 per year; or \$60,000 for the initial 5 year period. The other option would be to support Mr. Perry’s roof-top dining dream and help it become reality by modifying the plaza once he secures engineering, permitting, and obtaining AARC approval for the historic structure.

Attorney Haag stated a third option, that the city could acquire the 4’ strip along the building – encroachment.

President Hepfer expressed her disappointment with this occurring and was not pleased with the options. She questioned Mr. Perry if he had advised anyone that they were putting stuff on his property. Mr. Perry advised that he had and they would get back with him.

Councilman Ryan stated that we made permanent improvements to the property which benefit the owner. It may be a better option to purchase the property, but thinks the roof top dining would be welcomed in the downtown.

President Hepfer questioned if we acquired the property and Mr. Perry decided to pursue the Roof Top Dining, then we would have to come back to drawing board??

Attorney Haag stated that regardless, if the roof top dining is not acceptable to City Council, the only solution is to acquire the land and lease it as is.

Councilwoman Bega stated that with these option she would lean more toward Mr. Perry looking into feasibility study of rooftop dining and would be a nice addition in the downtown.

Attorney Haag spoke to ADA compliance with an elevator.

Mr. Perry advised that he wished to have an open deck to serve wine and beer, and not a restaurant, and spoke to the engineering/architectural design of the structure.

Councilman McBride stated that if we were to support the concept of the Roof Top Dining, and during this course of action we find out that this is not going to work out, would we then have to deal with a rental issue in the future that is exhorbant? It was noted that we would likely move to acquisition.

City Manager DiGiovanni noted that the cost to purchase would be less than the term of the lease. If it didn't work out, we would work it out with the property owner.

Councilman Ryan motioned to support the concept of Roof Top Dining and commit to modifications to the plaza once all permits and approvals are secured by the owner. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried.

10)b) Agreement for Land Swap was addressed. City Manager DiGiovanni advised that this issue started in 1999 by County Government wanting to develop a business park at the Inverness Airport, with the access determined to be Watson Road which intersects with Hwy 41 S. They had no land or plan, but a concept that we agreed to support. The City rebuilt the Waste Water Facility into a reclaimed/recovery plant providing the Inverness Golf and Country Club with reclaimed water, and freed up land.

County came to City again asking for more land, and Inverness asked they explore another venue. We then moved to a concept of a land swap. City Manager noted a map showing the former Amerigas property and the tentacle that comes out by the Bowling Alley on 41 N. There was disagreement with the proposed property values. The City tried to bring the parties together through the Nine Point Agreement. County is now willing to provide the Amerigas property and no longer ask for a property exchange. They now wish for an easement along Watson Road, with the City retaining ownership of the land. City Manager noted aspects of the map to include the path of the road going past the Animal Shelter. This proposal has been reviewed by legal counsel of both sides. The Amerigas property and Globe Spur line will connect to Rails to Trail and potentially a site to develop a community garden. This action before Council is a favorable arrangement for Council to consider.

Councilman Ryan asked for confirmation that this is a no fault on potential hazards on both sides. City Attorney Haag stated if a problem occurs, it goes back to original status quo.

Councilwoman Bega questioned where the industrial park was going to be. City Manager noted that the zoning will not support develop of an industrial park and would need to be changed.

Councilman Hinkle questioned the zoning of this particular area of City property with City Manager stating it is zoned to support much more than the County property.

Councilman McBride had prior concerns with land swap, but is this is not a swap, but an easement for a piece of property.

City Manager noted that this was approved through legal counsel, but has not gone before County Commission yet.

Councilman Hinkle motioned to accept the terms and condition of the enclosed Agreement for land transfer and easement allocation. Seconded by Councilman Ryan. The motion carried.

10)c) Fire Truck Decal was addressed. City Manager DiGiovanni reference the attached photo illustration of a logo for the first Fire Truck. The logo will involve the City Seal with the “City of Inverness” across the top and “Fire Dept.) underneath, in gold lettering, outlined in metallic black. He noted that the purchase and inspection of this vehicle proves it to be an outstanding acquisition. No action is warranted.

10)d) Events & Visitors Bureau Temporary Employees was addressed. City Personnel Regulations provides a process for the establishment of temporary positions. This is a temporary position (when needed) that will perform time sensitive services to support the City Festival/Event/Marketing program, which will involve being assigned to the Event & Visitors Bureau; Pay Rate: \$12.00; Oct. thru Nov. 2015 – 200 hrs. max for Cooter Festival, Art Festival and the Grand Prix; Feb. thru April 2016 – 200 hrs. max for St. Patrick’s Festival & Taste of Inverness. This schedule will maintain compliance with IRS Rules and keep from incurring Florida Retirement System costs.

Councilwoman Bega motioned to authorize the creation of a temporary position and defined herein to support the event and marketing program of the City. Seconded by Councilman Ryan . The motion carried unanimously.

10)e) Fire Services Agreement – (Verbal) City Manager noted we are still discussing the transition of two vehicles from the Sheriff’s office. These will be inspected and if not viable for service, we can use them as trade in for others. The City will ensure they are up to service.

Councilman Hinkle questioned the fire services agreement with the County and if we are working on Fire Service for the east side. City Manager stated that question is directed to the County and they will determine if the will reopen the Gospel Island station and the West Highland station. They did move the Floral City station farther south. They are looking at those dynamics and what will be best suited for the residence outside municipalities. We will enter into an agreement with the County involving Mutual Aid. City Manager noted there are benefits residing within municipal boundaries.

10)f) Employee Compensation Program was addressed with City Manager DiGiovanni advising the we have had conversation with Collective Bargaining Unit, have built the budget based on a number of elements. Last year City Council agreed to provide \$1,000 across the board to every employee which enriched the bottom end to a better situation. We have not done an across % increase for many years and what is before you this evening for your consideration is an across the board program of 3% which will include both the collective bargaining (unionized) and the non-union employees to include the two Charter Officers, a total of 32 employees, 6 P/T's, and 2 Charter Officers, totaling \$48,000. We have gone from 115 employees in 1995 to 38 employees in 2015.

Councilman Ryan stated that this was warranted and the employees work is exceptional and appreciated.

Councilman McBride had no problem with amount of money in terms of 3% equaling approx. \$48,000. He suggested we could use this same amount of money divided by number of employees and still give an across the board lump sum payment to staff, thereby giving a larger % to lower paid staff because it benefits higher paid employee, more than lower paid.

City Manager DiGiovanni stated that the \$48k includes benefits and is not liquid money. If you want to do across the board lump sum amount, that we can apply, or you want to do the 3%. I was also looking at the managerial levels commitment to the city and feeling that those pressures and dynamics are very different than the hourly employee. They are under much more stress and responsibility. He thinks the point and time of awarding compensation is here and if it's more appropriate to do an across the board monetary amount, we can figure that too, and can be voted tonight as it is within the budget. If you want to do a monetary amount for employees up to a certain position in the city (blue collar) we can do that, but then ask that they may wish to consider the positions in higher responsibility to look at differently and consider maybe 3% for them. This can be applied retroactively to a certain point in time, but if we are doing monetary, we can also apply that retroactively.

Councilman McBride – I was not thinking of an arbitrary amount, but was looking at the overall cost of the package. What the City Manager is expressing has a great deal of appeal.

Councilman Hinkle stated that he would be in favor of doing what the City Manager recommended, that we set a \$1,000 figure for the hourly employees and a 3% raise for management position.

Councilwoman Bega questioned that if we change what has been accepted by the bargaining unit, does it have to go back. City Manager noted that if you raise it, you never have to go back. If they disagree, I'll bring their element back.

Mayor Plaisted state the reality is that management is on the job 24 hrs. a day, thinking about what they have to do.

Councilwoman Bega stated that hourly employees get paid for working longer hours while salary employees are not.

Councilman Hinkle motioned that we set a \$1,000 amount for hourly employees and a three percent (3%) raise for management positions. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega . The motion carried unanimously,

City Manager DiGiovanni additionally reported on the following:

- As requested, we appeared before the Legislative Delegation and made a presentation.
- A huge Mustang Car show occurred this weekend at Nick Nicholas Ford (City Sponsor) and participated as judges.
- Working on a program to bring additional technology into the utility system. This utility system needs to be monitored 24/7. We need a system that provides details for a quicker response to issues, and this would be a tremendous tool to make the utility system much more dependable.
- Met with residents of Pine Grove, and showing effort goes a long way.
- Sunday was the Annual Bicycle Ride, but the numbers of riders were down. He believes all of the recent rain contributed to the lack of riders. Would like to see if they may consider moving the ride to Saturday. Riders that come from far distances find it tougher to attend on Sunday.

COUNCIL/MAYOR SUBJECTS

Councilman McBride spoke of the City moving into high gear with upcoming events. Reminded that the Hernando – Citrus MPO meeting will be Oct. 20th at 1pm to develop transportation priorities.

Councilman Ryan attended the Habitat for Humanity ribbon-cutting and commended their efforts. He spoke of the budget meetings and this is a great town to live in and the way we are moving forward with issues is to our credit. Good to see people participating in our government.

Councilman Hinkle agreed that it is an honor to serve our community and that it's positive to have people come to us with their concerns. He spoke of the Crystal River Aquarium and it will be great to create jobs for everyone.

Councilwoman Bega stated it is great to move forward with the agreement with the County and come to terms on that land. She spoke to the Cooter Festival events.

Mayor Plaisted spoke to the bonuses and raises and gave a heartfelt thanks to our employees, as they are such a dedicated group. He spoke of the grand opening at Southern Pines and how George Rusaw has done a great job with Habitat for Humanity. Cooterstock is going to be a great thing. The Crystal River Aquarium project is exciting and if anyone can get it done, it is Art Jones.

Council President Hepfer agreed with what has been said about Habitat for Humanity, it is a great program. She questioned if reminder can go in the water bills about people leaving lawn clippings along the side of roads.

CITIZENS NOT ON AGENDA

None

Meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.

City Clerk

Council President