

A Regular Meeting of the Apalachicola City Commission was held on Tuesday, February 6, 2024 at 4:00 PM at the former Apalachicola Municipal Library located at 74 6th Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Brenda Ash, Commissioner Despina George, Commissioner Anita Grove, Commissioner Donna Duncan, Commissioner Adriane Elliott, City Manager Travis Wade, City Attorney Dan Hartman, Planner Bree Robinson, Code Enforcement Officer PJ Erwin, Deputy Clerk Sheneidra Cummings, Chief of Police Bobby Varnes

Regular Meeting called to order by Mayor Ash followed by Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Motion to adopt agenda made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried 5 to 0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Myrtis Wynn expressed concern regarding the housing and homeless issue in Franklin County.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Motion to recommend changes to Rule 29 Boards, Committees, and Meetings, of the Rules of Procedure to provide clarity and understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and processes of the City's Citizen Advisory Committees made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Grove.

Discussion held.

Motion carried 4 to 1. Commissioner George opposed.

BATTERY PARK MARINA BOAT RAMP STICKER RESIDENT OR PROPERTY OWNER

Commissioner Grove requested that all Franklin County property owners be eligible for the free ramp sticker. Commissioner George agreed.

Commissioner Elliott and Commissioner Duncan agree that only actual Franklin County residents should receive the free ramp sticker.

City Manager Wade explained that proving residency is much easier than proving property ownership.

No action taken by Commission.

FLOODPLAIN VARIANCE – 100 AVENUE D

Motion to approve a floodplain variance for 100 Avenue D on the basis that it is a historic structure, and the proposed work will not diminish the historic value made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. Motion carried 5 to 0.

FWC FLORIDA BOATING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM – BAY AVENUE SEAWALL APPLICATION AUTHORIZATION

Motion to authorize City Grant Coordinator and Project Manager Sarah Bourque to submit an application for repairs on the Bay Avenue Seawall for the Fish and Wildlife Conservative Commission (FWC) Florida Boating Improvement Program (FBIP) grant with City Manager Wade and Mayor Ash as signing authorities made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. Motion carried 5 to 0.

FDEP/CHAPMAN BOTANICAL GARDENS PROJECT APPROVAL

FDEP representatives Jason Towle, Lydia Panabaker, and Michael Foster presented site plan, in accordance with the management plan, for the restroom and pavilion to be constructed at Chapman Botanical Gardens.

Public comments consisted of the updating of FDEP management plan for the Chapman Botanical Gardens, maintenance responsibility of restrooms and pavilion, support and nonsupport of proposed restroom and pavilion, removal of trees, lack of public workshops for project, parking, and Orman House repairs.

Mr. Towle and Josh Hodgson addressed public concerns.

Commission discussion consisted of project deadline; lack of community involvement for project; removal of trees; agreement with FDEP regarding maintenance and gardening, park hours, admission fees, parking, Orman House repairs, pavilion size, management plan renewal, pavilion design, landscaping plan, and project being constructed in a flood plain area.

Motion to approve the proposed project for pavilion and restroom contingent there is one meeting to discuss design, aesthetics, and trees made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Grove.

Motion amended to postpone project approval until March 5th regular meeting in order to obtain additional information made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Grove.

Discussion continued regarding management plan and proposed project.

Motion carried 4 to 1. Commissioner George opposed.

TREE COMMITTEE ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

Discussion held and public comments received.

Motion to approve Tree Committee’s role and responsibilities as presented made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Duncan. Motion carried 3 to 2 with Commissioner George and Commissioner Grove opposing.

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MEMBER APPOINTMENT

Motion to appoint Chris Presnell to Board of Adjustment made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Duncan. Motion carried 5 to 0.

HILLSIDE SIDEWALK & LIGHTING PROJECT – WORKSHOP/SPECIAL MEETING SCHEDULING

Motion to set workshop and special meeting on February 20, 2024 at 5PM to discuss Hillside Sidewalk and Lighting Project made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried 5 to 0.

FINANCE DIRECTOR DECISION

Motion to appoint Lee Mathes as Finance Director with the contingency that Ms. Mathes receive training and assistance from a certified CPA made by Commissioner George.

Commissioner Duncan immediately opposed and suggested re-stating the motion to reflect that Ms. Mathes' hiring was not contingent upon receiving outside assistance, but rather can be an added benefit to her while in that position, if the Commission agree.

Motion was restated to appoint Lee Mathes as Finance Director, with the Commission to discuss hiring assistance from an outside firm at the March regular meeting made by Commissioner George, seconded by Commissioner Grove. Motion carried 5 to 0.

ARPA

Motion to set ARPA workshop for February 20, 2024 at 6PM made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried 5 to 0.

GENERATOR CONTRACT

Motion to award contract to BGN Contractors for Police Department and City Hall generators made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner George.

Commissioner George questioned the price difference between the contract and bid amount.

City Manager Wade explained that this project is divided in two with two different funding sources. BGN Contractors' bid included both projects.

Motion amended to award contract for Police/Fire Department and City Hall generators to BGN Contractors in the amount of \$211,650,000 made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried 5 to 0.

MAYOR & COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Mayor Ash directed City Manager Wade to draft letter to Early Head Start for non-removal from 6th Street Recreation Center; addressed Avenue L drainage issues; and would like the Manager Wade to present options for a volunteer recognition event.

Commissioner Grove inquired about the DEP \$5 million appropriation.

City Manager Wade stated that The Southern Group is advocating for the entire \$5 million and should have additional information for the next meeting.

Commissioner Grove expressed concern regarding the ordinance pertaining to demolition process and would like for item to be included on next regular meeting agenda.

Commissioner George recommends that the next regular meeting agenda have an update for items the Commission has directed to staff on, as these items are not being made a priority. Commissioner George will submit a board action request for the agenda item.

Commissioner Duncan addressed drainage issue on 21st Street and Ellis Van Vleet; anchor found in the Apalachicola River that could possibility be donated to City; and requested an update on the Robert Davis 10th Street property matter.

Attorney Hartman provided and update. (See Attorney's Report)

Commissioner Elliott recommends that more speed limit signs be posted in downtown area and recommends the City establish a speed limit standard for the C1 zone.

CITY MANAGER COMMUNICATION

City Manager Wade updated Commission on FLC sessions.

FINANCE DIRECTOR COMMUNICATION

No report.

ATTORNEY COMMUNICATIONS

Attorney Hartman made a request on behalf of Robert Davis regarding the property on 10th St. requesting the Commission allow an additional 60 days to meet his requirements. The Commission honored his request.

Motion to allow a 60-day extension to Robert Davis regarding 10th Street property matter made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried 5 to 0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve consent agenda made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried 5 to 0.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

January and February reports will be included in March agenda packet.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. Motion carried 5 to 0.

Brenda Ash, Mayor

Sheneidra Cummings, Deputy Clerk

