

A Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Apalachicola was held on Tuesday, November 4, 2025 at 6:00PM at the Commission Meeting Room, 74 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Brenda Ash, Commissioner Despina George, Commissioner Donna Knutson, Commissioner Donna Duncan, Commissioner Adriane Elliott, City Manager Charles Anderson, Attorney Dan Hartman, Finance Director Lee Mathes, Chief of Police Bobby Varnes

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

### **AGENDA ADOPTION**

Mayor Ash requests agenda be amended to add Item 2 under New Business – WWTP Package A Bid Award.

Motion to approve amended agenda made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Duncan. Motion carried 5 to 0.

### **PUBLIC HEARING – ORDINANCE 2025-04 – FY 24/25 BUDGET AMENDMENT**

Public hearing opened by Mayor Ash.

Attorney Hartman read Ordinance 2025-04 in its entirety.

Ms. Mathes outlined budget amendment line items.

Commissioner George stated this budget amendment does not include outstanding accounts payable or FY 24/25 audit adjustments.

No public comment.

Public hearing closed and regular meeting opened by Mayor Ash.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Torben Madson – Mr. Madson complimented City on downtown cleanup and lodged complaint regarding the loud music coming from event that was held in vicinity of old Q's Lounge during Seafood Festival weekend.

**INTERLOCAL ANIMAL CONTROL AGREEMENT WITH COUNTY**

Attorney Hartman outlined the updated agreement noting there have been a couple of changes made to the agreement. The original agreement was signed by the City and returned to the County in June 2021. It was not fully executed and contained slightly different terms. The changes were the amount \$3,500 (2021) vs. \$7,000 (2025), and that a City Police Officer must be present (2025) as opposed to an officer or deputy (2021).

Chief Varnes expressed concern about an officer having to be present on the scene with the Animal Control Officer. Chief Varnes stated that at times there is only one officer on duty so it will be difficult to say that an officer will be present at all times with the Animal Control Officer.

Attorney Hartman stated Item 4 can be amended to read that an officer will be present unless the officer is called to an emergency or on another call that must be handled.

Motion to approve Interlocal Animal Control Agreement with amendment to Item 4 as outlined by Attorney Hartman made by Commissioner George, seconded by Commissioner Knutson.

Discussion held concerning fee, number of animal complaints each year, and presence of a City Police Officer.

Motion carried 5 to 0.

**WWTP BID AWARD**

City Manager Anderson outlined WWTP bids as follows:

North Florida Construction - \$9,318,397

Talcon - \$9,671,807

Marshall Brothers - \$10,956,000

Motion to award WWTP Package A bid award to North Florida Construction made by Commissioner George, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. Motion carried 5 to 0.

**2<sup>ND</sup> READING & ADOPTION – ORDINANCE 2025-04 – FY 24/25 BUDGET AMENDMENT**

Attorney Hartman read Ordinance 2025-04 in its entirety.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2025-04 amending FY 24/25 Budget made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried 5 to 0.

**MAYOR & COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

1. Mayor Ash asked Chief Varnes to address the noise complaints received from activities during Seafood Festival weekend.

Chief Varnes stated that each year there are a lot of activity and parties during Seafood Festival weekend. The noise complaints came from an event that was held Friday and Saturday night in the vicinity of the old Q's Lounge area. An event permit was approved and signed by the City Manager for both nights. If an event is held without an approved event permit, then the police department shuts down the event. Chief Varnes continued stating there will always be backlash and complaints regarding events and parties during Seafood Festival weekend.

Discussion held concerning time limit on events and loudness of music.

Mayor Ash recommends reviewing the current Event Permit Form and adding language on the rules regarding noise levels.

2. Commissioner Elliott commented on County mandatory garbage pickup, City no longer issuing Oyster Licenses, and the City's newly appointed Public Information Officer.

3. Commissioner Knutson commented on her attendance at the Florida League of Cities new commissioner training, meeting people in community and excited to be part of the City decision making, starting recycling program, and asked for update on African American Museum.

City Manager Anderson stated the permit was issued last week for the museum.

4. Commissioner George commented on current election ordinance stating that Attorney Hartman needs to draft changes to accommodate the swearing in of newly elected Commission members in November after the election and not in October as originally stated, and researching MuniCode to make sure all ordinances submitted are error free and are correctly online.

Attorney Hartman stated he will look at his notes from the last election ordinance adopted, but there are some changes that will require a charter amendment and some changes that don't require a charter amendment, but he will investigate this matter.

5. Mayor Ash requested update on Denton Cove settlement agreement.

Attorney Hartman stated the settlement agreement states Denton Cove will pay the City \$70,000 to go towards upgrades to the IGA Lift Station. Denton Cove asked for a 60-day period for them to apply for a grant, but the grant has yet to be submitted, and it has now been 80 days. The City can tell Denton Cove that we want the money now or we can hold out for grant funds.

Discussion held.

Commissioner Knutson stated this needs to be settled and recommends the City advise Denton Cove to submit the \$70,000.

Motion to enforce the settlement agreement and advise Denton Cove to the City the agreed amount of \$70,000 made by Commissioner George, seconded by Commissioner Duncan. Motion carried 5 to 0.

6. Mayor Ash asked if tap fee ordinance had been reviewed.

City Manager Anderson stated that Florida Rural Water is working on rates that will incorporate the tap fees with the water and sewer rates.

7. Mayor Ash wished everyone a great holiday season.

#### **CITY MANAGER COMMUNICATIONS**

City Manager Anderson updated Commission on conversations held with Representative Shoaf's office regarding the City's water and sewer utility system; meeting is scheduled with DEP to discuss the next compliance steps needed for the water and sewer systems; replacement of fire hydrants is ongoing; Sgt. Ashley Webb has undertaken part-time Public Information Officer duties; Well 6 is running at twice the capacity that it had been operating under before and new motors for Wells 5 & 7 have been ordered; thanked City crews for getting the City prepped for the Seafood Festival; City staff will be hosting community listening sessions that will be held at 6PM at Holy Family on November 14<sup>th</sup> and November 17<sup>th</sup> at 6PM at the Commission Meeting Room; work is progressing on the scrubber/aerator; the next phase of the State's annual appropriation money will be committed to stormwater drainage projects, the IGA lift station rehab and upgrades, and complete the Flovac Monitoring system. This will leave approximately \$2.6M that can be earmarked for the WWTP Phase II project which has a projected cost of approximately \$8.7M.

Mayor Ash stated that if the Commission wanted to attend the listening sessions, then the sessions must be posted on the website meeting calendar.

Commissioner George asked about projects in addition to the Stewardship funds.

City Manager Anderson stated the City will be pursuing any monies that we can qualify for.


#### **ATTORNEY COMMUNICATIONS**

Attorney Hartman had nothing further to report.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

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

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

  
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Brenda Ash, Mayor  
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Lee Mathes, Finance Director