

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, HELD IN THE CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS, 100 NORTH U.S. #1, FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, AT 6:30 P.M. ON MONDAY, **MAY 18, 2020.**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hudson called the May 18, 2020 Regular Meeting of the City Commission to order at 6:30 PM.

2. OPENING PRAYER - Chris Fogal, Treasure Coast Christian Alliance

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Linda Hudson; Commissioner Rufus Alexander; Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson; Commissioner Thomas Perona; Commissioner Reginald Sessions

Staff Present: City Clerk Linda Cox
City Manager Nicholas Mimms
City Attorney Peter Sweeney

Commissioner Alexander was present by telephone.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Approval of Minutes from April 28, 2020 Special Meeting and May 04, 2020 Regular Meeting.

Motion was made by Commissioner Thomas Perona, seconded by Commissioner Reginald Sessions to approve the minutes from the April 28, 2020 Special Meeting and the May 04, 2020 Regular Meeting.

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Reginald Sessions

Passed

6. PROCLAMATIONS

7. LETTERS TO COMMISSION

- a. Letter from Sam & Anita Allen thanking the Fort Pierce Police Department for their exemplary service and dependability during these difficult times.

8. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON AGENDA ITEMS NOT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Any person who wishes to comment on an agenda item which is not under Public Hearings on the Agenda may be heard at this time and must sign up to speak in advance. Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes or less, as directed by the Mayor, as this section of the Agenda is limited to thirty minutes. The City Commission will not be able to take any official actions under Comments from the Public. Speakers will address the Mayor, Commissioners, and the Public with respect. Inappropriate language will not be tolerated.

Charles Hayek – Item 13e.

James Ippilito – Item 13e.

9. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Linda Cox, City Clerk has requested to add a Letter of Support of the Manatee Observation and Education Center (MOEC), endorsing its grant application to the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs as Item 11c.

Motion was made by Commissioner Reginald Sessions, seconded by Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson to approve and set the Agenda as amended.

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Reginald Sessions

Passed

10. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS

a. Fort Pierce Utilities Authority Update - John Tompeck

John Tompeck, FPUA Director of Utilities provided an update on the Fort Pierce Utility Authority. Mr. Tompeck went over the FPUA COVID-19 response with a timeline of activities and preventative measures taken to ensure the safety of employees and customers. The FPUA had approximately 140 employees who were able to work from home during the State of Emergency. Employees will stagger their return through June 8, 2020. Control rooms remain under strict isolation and the customer service lobby will reopen on May 20, 2020. Plexiglas partitions have been installed to protect customers and employees, modifications have been made to the air conditioning system with the installation of scrubbers and ionization units, and protocols on handling customers have been established.

To assist customers, FPUA reduced the PCA by two dollars effective May 01, 2020, suspended disconnections, eliminated late fees and service charges, established interest-free payment plans, and is working with Mustard Seed and ALPI to assist customers to clear outstanding charges.

Mr. Tompeck summarized costs incurred because of the COVID-19 pandemic and provided a customer payment analysis from February 02, 2020 through May 10, 2020.

Mr. Tompeck discussed electric rates and provided a ten-year overview. The current rate of \$103.84 per 1000 KWH is the lowest since September 2005. Rates are currently below the ARP, Municipal and IOU averages. FPUA has a plan to keep the rates as low as possible. The FPUA does have a restricted amount set aside for use only during emergencies such as this pandemic and hurricanes. FPUA is currently developing a new electric rate resolution which will involve the restructure of rates to put more of the cost as "fixed" rather than "variable", have higher bills in the winter with lower bills in the summer, be revenue neutral, as well as a solar tariff and solar subscription program. Current combined rates for electric, water, and wastewater are still the lowest in the county. Mr. Tompeck also discussed the AMI schedule for the contract that was approved in 2019. Meter and module delivery and installation began in March 2020 and data collection and testing begins in May 2020. The new customer portal goes live in July 2020. In August 2020, FPUA will begin the five-year deployment across the entire service territory. Benefits to upgrading meters include safety inspections on all FPUA services at 53,000 locations; remote turn on/off, and decreased response time to issues. The benefit to customers will be the ability to monitor usage 24/7; the ability to project bills and control usage; and to conserve energy and save money.

Mr. Tompeck provided updates on the Digiorgio sanitary sewer project, Fleetwood Acres expansion project at the southeast corner of Edwards Road and South 25th Street, the 2020-2021 Expansion Project #1 at Rolyat Street and Kerr Street, the 2020-2021 Expansion Project #2 at Harson Way and Jefferson Parkway; and the WRF relocation projects.

11. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approve letter of support for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Committee's grant application for planning for the Lincoln Theater.
- b. Approval to submit and accept grant application with the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs for Sunrise Theatre for general operating support grant in the amount of \$150,000.
- c. ADD ON ITEM: Letter of support for the Manatee Observation and Education Center's (MOEC) grant application to the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.

Motion was made by Commissioner Reginald Sessions, seconded by Commissioner Thomas Perona to approve items 11a, 11b, and 11c.

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Reginald Sessions

Passed

12. PUBLIC HEARINGS

13. CITY COMMISSION

- a. Resolution 20-R23 reappointing Carlos Diaz to serve on the Police Officers Retirement Fund - 185 Board.

City Clerk Linda Cox introduced the Resolution, read by title only, into the record.

RESOLUTION NO. 20-R23

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, CERTIFYING THE APPOINTMENT OR REAPPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER TO THE POLICE OFFICERS RETIREMENT FUND BOARD OF TRUSTEES; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Linda Cox, City Clerk reported that one application for reappointment was received from Carlos Diaz.

Motion was made by Commissioner Thomas Perona, seconded by Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson to approve Resolution 20-R23 and reappoint Carlos Diaz to the Police Officers Retirement Board.

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Reginald Sessions
Passed

- b. Resolution 20-R24 reappointing Mayor and Commission appointees to the Arts & Culture Advisory Board.

City Clerk Linda Cox introduced the Resolution, read by title only, into the record.

RESOLUTION NO. 20-R24

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, CERTIFYING THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE ARTS AND CULTURE ADVISORY BOARD; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Linda Cox, City Clerk reported that the terms for the Mayor and Commission's appointees have expired and all members are seeking reappointment.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Appointed by:</u>
Doretha Hair Truesdall	Commissioner Alexander
Jon Neprud	Commissioner Johnson
Jeanne Johansen	Commissioner Perona
Luke Croghan	Commissioner Sessions
Julie Pouliotte	Mayor Hudson

Motion was made by Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Reginald Sessions to approve Resolution 20-R24 and reappoint Doretha Hair Truesdall, Jon Neprud, Jeanne Johansen, Luke Croghan and Julie Pouliotte to the Arts and Culture Advisory Board.

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Reginald Sessions
Passed

- c. Resolution No. 20-R25 appointing members to the Communitywide Council.

City Clerk Linda Cox introduced the Resolution, read by title only, into the record.

RESOLUTION NO. 20-R25

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, CERTIFYING THE APPOINTMENT AND REAPPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNITYWIDE COUNCIL; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Linda Cox, City Clerk indicated that there were three applications for appointment at large received:

- Charles Hayek, At Large
- Lieser Hicks, At Large
- Ella Hodge Wims, At Large

Ballots were distributed to the Mayor and Commissioners.

Commissioner Alexander: Charles Hayek Lieser Hicks

Commissioner Johnson:	Lieser Hicks	Charles Hayek
Commissioner Perona:	Lieser Hicks	Charles Hayek
Commissioner Sessions:	Ella Hodge Wims	Lieser Hicks
Mayor Hudson:	Ella Hodge Wims	Lieser Hicks

Results: Tie between Charles Hayek and Ella Hodge Wims based upon the point system. The roll will be called for Commissioners' choice of candidate:

Commissioner Alexander:	Charles Hayek
Commissioner Johnson:	Charles Hayek
Commissioner Perona:	Charles Hayek
Commissioner Sessions:	Ella Hodge Wims
Mayor Hudson:	Charles Hayek

Sarah Smith will be appointed as the Target area member as she was the only eligible applicant.

Results: Charles Hayek, At Large and Lieser Hicks, At Large, and Sarah Smith, Target have been appointed.

Motion was made by Commissioner Thomas Perona, seconded by Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson to approve Resolution 20-R25 and appoint Charles Hayek, At Large, Lieser Hicks, At Large and Sarah Smith, Target members to the Communitywide Council.

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Reginald Sessions
Passed

- d. Discussion and direction regarding the ability of the City Commission to increase (or decrease) business tax receipt fees by up to 5% as allowed by Florida Statutes every other year.

Linda Cox, City Clerk stated in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2018 the City Commission increased the Business Tax Receipt (BTR) rate by five percent as allowed by Florida Statutes. In 2016 the rate remained level with no increase or decrease. Every other year, the Commission is allowed to increase up to five percent, decrease by five percent or do nothing to the BTR rate. The annual revenue from Business Tax Receipts is approximately \$270,000.00. If increased, the revenue would be an estimated additional \$13,700.00 and if decreased, would be the same estimated \$13,700.00.

The City Commission agreed unanimously that helping our business community during this unprecedented time is vital.

Motion was made by Commissioner Reginald Sessions, seconded by Commissioner Thomas Perona to decrease the Business Tax Receipt rate by the maximum amount allowed by Florida Statute of five percent (-5%).

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Reginald Sessions
Passed

- e. Discussion regarding police officer salaries at the request of Commissioner Alexander.

Commissioner Alexander inquired as to how many officers have resigned in the past two years. Chief Hobbly-Burney stated in 2019 that ten officers resigned, twelve officers were hired and trained. In 2018 seven officers resigned and eight officers were hired and trained. The resignations were due to the pay scale. The officers were dedicated to the City of Fort Pierce and filled with regret in having to leave employment. Eighty-nine percent of officers in 2019 worked an extra-duty job to try to make ends meet. The officers who have left to join other agencies make approximately \$10,000.00 more in salary than what Fort Pierce offers. The increase would be approximately \$400,000.00 to bring salaries comparable to other surrounding agencies. Commissioner Alexander supports a raise to the police officers. Commissioner Perona is concerned about how to fund this deserved increase. Chief Hobbly-Burney explained that each officer that is replaced costs approximately \$36,000.00 for the training of a new officer. Commissioner Sessions would like the City to expend the \$36,000.00 spent per replacement to retain the current staff. Commissioner Johnson inquired about the take-home salary. Chief Hobbly-Burney stated that retirement and health insurance are the largest deductions from gross salaries. Fort Pierce currently has 131 sworn officers and 15 vacancies. Chief Burney-Hobbly acknowledged the significant increase being requested and suggested a phase-in approach to raises for the officers. Commissioner Alexander stated that this is an urgent matter that needs immediate attention just as much as

the golf course or theatres. Mayor Hudson expressed that every line item on the budget needs to be examined to be able to find the money to fund this request without levying a millage rate increase.

The City Commission has given direction to the City Manager, Nick Mimms, to review the city budget to find the necessary monies to provide an adequate police officer compensation plan. Commissioner Alexander asked that the general fund contingency fund line item be looked at. Johnna Morris, Finance Director stated that the contingency fund is ten percent of the annual budget and is reserved for emergencies and catastrophic disasters. Commissioner Alexander asked in the past ten years, how many times has this fund been used. Johanna Morris indicated that since she has been with the City of Fort Pierce, the contingency fund has not been utilized.

Nick Mimms, City Manager stated that staff will be meeting with the union representatives on Friday, May 22, 2020. By mid-June, we should be in receipt of preliminary numbers from the St. Lucie County Tax Collector and Department of Revenue. After collecting the relevant data Johnna Morris, Chief Hobbey-Burney and Nick Mimms will meet to review the numbers, priority objectives, and determining how we will meet those objectives. A report will be prepared for the Commission which will include choices. The compensation adjustment will be included in each of the choices. Mr. Mimms would like to aim for the end of June for the presentation to the Commission.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Any person who wishes to comment on any subject may be heard at this time. Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes or less, as directed by the Mayor, as this section of the Agenda is limited to thirty minutes. The City Commission will not be able to take any official actions under Comments from the Public. Speakers will address the Mayor, Commissioners, and the Public with respect. Inappropriate language will not be tolerated.

Pinky Hendley
Mary Sirmons
Christine Kessel
Betty Bradwell
Kyle McCarthy
James Ippilito

15. COMMENTS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

Grant Assistance Program

City Manager, Nick Mimms stated it has been a very busy and hectic couple of months. We are moving forward with direction given at the April 28, 2020 meeting for the COVID-19 assistance plan. As of today, 1,143 three businesses and residents have been pre-screened for grant assistance. We have two programs we are offering. The mortgage and/or rental assistance program for residents with 1,093 applicants pre-screened, 172 applications received, and five applications that have been approved. Businesses are offered an assistance grant with the amount dependent on the number of employees. 360 business applicants were pre-screened, 87 applications received, and two applications that have been approved. Staff continues to assist residents and business in completing their applications. Mayor Hudson clarified that the funds used for these assistance programs could not have been used for salaries under any circumstances.

COVID-19 Testing

The City of Fort Pierce had a very successful week of COVID-19 testing. A total of 1006 tests were administered. Both swab and antibody tests were available. Of the 334 swab tests administered, four were positive. Of the 672 antibody tests administered, 13 were positive. There are plans to run another testing event tentatively scheduled for June 06, 2020. Mayor Hudson had visited the testing site and has also received several letters from constituents who were very pleased with the overall experience.

Food Distribution

The food distribution program includes the following partners: Boys & Girls Club of St. Lucie County, Graceway Village, and also the Treasure Coast Food Bank. So far, over 10,000 meals have been served to the community. This will culminate on May 30, 2020 with a large event where we will be distributing grocery packages which will feed a family of 4 or 5 for five days. City of Fort Pierce staff delivered 1,500 prepared meals at the COVID-19 testing site. Working with Graceway Village this past weekend, staff delivered over 200 meals to our senior and disabled residents in the Lawnwood Terrace area who were very appreciative. We will host a pop-up food distribution on May 22, 2020 in conjunction with the Treasure Coast Food Bank with details to be forthcoming.

Facility Access

City Hall remains closed to the public with appointment-only access to the Building Department. Sunrise Theatre and headquarters as well as substations for the Police Department remain closed to the public. The City Marina, Indian Hills Golf Course, the beaches, parks and boat ramps are all open. During the next two months we will gradually and progressively increase access for the public to our city facilities. Protective measures are being implemented to protect the public and employees to reduce the person-to-person contact. City Commission meetings will continue to go forward. The City Commission informal conference meetings are still on a moratorium. Boards and Committees will resume beginning this week.

Communications

Updates for the public continue to be provided through public announcements, press releases, email alerts, and social media. The application Zoom has been provided to city officials for virtual meetings.

Employee Status

As of today, five employees have reported and exhibited symptoms consistent with the COVID-19 virus. All five have been medically examined, tested negative and returned to work. Three employees are currently using the intermittent Families First Coronavirus Response Act leave time to care for children.

Budget

We have reduced the operating expenses by over one million dollars. Beginning today, the Sunrise Theatre staff will be on a two-week furlough. Upon return, there will be departmental restructuring to reduce the staff and overhead. It is anticipated that the theatre will remain closed for this season and through the summer months. We are embarking on the finalization of the economic recovery strategy including a reduction in some redevelopment fees to assist and attract developers giving them an incentive to move forward in the City of Fort Pierce.

Commissioner Johnson discussed an incident that occurred at a city beach this past weekend. Martin County still had restricted access to their beaches. Broward and Miami-Dade counties will not open their beaches or public parks until after the holiday weekend. Mr. Mimms indicated that increased presence by code and law enforcement will be in place especially at Jaycee Park. The Mayor and City Commission discussed options for beach and park opening/closure for the safety of citizens for the upcoming holiday weekend.

By consensus, City Commission directed the City Manager to close South Causeway Park, South Causeway Beach, Jaycee Park, and Jaycee Beach for the Memorial Day Weekend and not to reopen until Tuesday, May 26, 2020. Boat ramps will remain open.

City Attorney, Peter Sweeney had no update.

16. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Perona would like staff to review the stormwater drainage issue on 2nd Street affecting a historic property at 729 S. Indian River Drive and keep the City Commission informed of the status.

Commissioner Alexander sent greetings to the community and wishes good health and prosperity to all.

Commissioner Sessions would like to see the feline spay/neutering program resume.

Commissioner Johnson was encouraged to see the 17th Street construction resume. Commissioner would like to have an update on the surtax programs. Nick Mimms will get that information to the City Commissioners.

Mayor Hudson enjoyed working with Graceway Village and meeting the seniors of our community. It is vital for the City of Fort Pierce that everyone complete the 2020 Census. A public service announcement in English, Spanish, and Creole has been created to try to reach as many people in the City of Fort Pierce as possible. Mayor Hudson would like to acknowledge the non-essential workers as well as the essential workers.

17. ADJOURNMENT

Immediately following adjournment, please move toward the doors and exit the chambers.

This allows for the safe and courteous exit of all persons, and those on the dais.

Conversations after the meeting should be held outside of chambers, in the foyer or elsewhere, but not in the commission chambers where lights will be out as soon as the chambers are empty.

Mayor Linda Hudson adjourned the meeting at **10:24 PM.**

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

MAYOR COMMISSIONER