



Fort Myers Beach Management & Planning Session

Council Chambers
2525 Estero Blvd.
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931

Minutes

Thursday, March 9, 2023

9:00 AM

ORDER OF BUSINESS

FINAL

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members present: Mayor Allers, Vice Mayor Atterholt, Council Member King, Council Member Veatch and Council Member Woodson.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Interim Town Manager Holley discussed the emergency loan program from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and noted that interim Town Manager Wilkins and staff were working on applications. He indicated that he would be in Tallahassee next week and referred to topics in the summary that interim Town Manager Wilkins sent out.

Interim Town Manager Holley explained the difference between FEMA loans and grants.

A. Town Manager Selection Process

Discussion to revise the Town Manager selection process.

Interim Town Manager Holley stated that the resolution was very detailed and Town Attorney Herin, Jr. was prepared to modify the resolution based on Council's decision. He noted that 27 of 82 applicants were qualified and the position was open until filled. He suggested that Council allow the interim Town Managers and Linda Toppi, acting HR Manager, to review the 27 applicants and bring a certain number in for a coffee and muffins meeting. Mayor Allers liked that the meetings would be open to the public. Council Member Veatch suggested a virtual meeting to allow more people to participate. He would like to see the matrix of how the candidates were evaluated. Interim Town Manager Holley replied that the matrix was based on his years of experience.

Vice Mayor Atterholt felt that hurricane or Florida experience should not be a prerequisite, especially if the candidate excelled in all other areas. He questioned whether the interim Town Managers could assist as consultants to help the transition. Interim Town Manager Holley replied that they would help with the transition, and he stated that leadership skills were the most important for the town. Interim Town Manager Wilkins did not rule out anyone without hurricane or Florida experience.

Council Member Veach indicated that the town would be dealing with the disaster for years and felt they needed someone who could do the job now. He supported the interim town managers assisting with the transition.

Council Member Woodson felt that strategic thinking and planning were key traits, along with being relationship-oriented and transparent. She trusted the interim town managers to whittle down the applicants to five and supported a more casual setting with input from the community. She suggested providing a framework for applicants when interviewing.

Council Member King supported the interim town managers interviewing the applicants.

Interim Town Manager Holley suggested that questions be prepared for the individual interviews in a casual setting and a scorecard would be used to rank applicants.

Mayor Allers hoped they would not rule out someone without a college degree and interim Town Manager Wilkins commented that it was preferred but not a requirement. Mayor Allers felt that being a strong leader with the ability to delegate were two essential characteristics. Good communication with the public was also important and he trusted the interim town managers to bring forth the best candidates.

The coffee and muffins meeting would consist of a one-hour reception and Town Attorney Herin, Jr. recommended that it be posted as a meeting to inform the public.

Consensus was reached to allow the interim town managers to screen the applicants.

Town Attorney Herin, Jr. indicated that he would distribute multiple versions of contracts to Council for review. Vice Mayor Atterholt requested that the town attorney and interim town managers provide recommendations regarding language.

Interim Town Manager Holley described the interview day as starting at 8:00 a.m. for the reception open to the public. One-on-one interviews would follow with a lunch break. The meeting would resume at 1:00 p.m. and candidates would be interviewed and ranked with public comments after the interviews and before the ranking. Interim Town Manager Holley noted the Council would have resumes before the interviews. Interim Town Manager Wilkins stated that a survey of Florida jurisdictions determined the salary range. Vice Mayor Atterholt suggested that the final applicants not be limited to an arbitrary number. Interim Town Manager Holley replied that they would bring forth between five and seven qualified candidates.

Vice Mayor Atterholt questioned whether a question-and-answer period would be available during the interviews. Interim Town Manager Holley indicated that all candidates had to be asked the same questions and it would be awkward to single out candidates during the process. He noted that the regular council meeting would be held after the rankings were complete. Consensus was reached that the number of candidates to come before Council would be up to seven.

Interim Town Manager Holley brought up setting a timeline and process to interview Town Attorneys. He indicated he would have a final number of applicants by the March 20, 2023, meeting and they could determine the process based on the number of responses.

B. FY23 Budget

FY23 Budget - First Draft Proposed Revised Annual Budget - General Fund

Accounting Manager Cheri Russ noted the budget in the packet was based on the revenues coming in and indicated it would be short, so \$1.1 million would be pulled from reserves. At the end of FY21, there were \$3.7 million of unassigned funds but \$788,000.00 for short-term rentals for workforce housing had to be pulled from the reserves. She cautioned that cutting revenue would increase what they had to draw from reserves. A new finance director with extensive experience was starting on Monday. She added that the town applied for a \$5 million community disaster loan for operating costs from FEMA. If revenues do not return to pre-storm levels within five years, the loan can be forgiven.

Vice Mayor Atterholt questioned whether funds set aside for projects last year were available. Manager Russ responded that those funds were now part of the reserves. She indicated that \$1.3 million was set aside for emergency funds and was not included in the reserves. Funds from the American Rescue Act of \$3.5 million were set aside for underground water and utility expenses. They could be reappropriated as long as the money benefits the public from COVID.

Manager Russ explained the line of credit from the state and noted that the remaining \$820,000.00 had to be used and expended by November of this year. She indicated that the town received \$7.6 million from FEMA and \$3 million from the insurance company and Tidal Basin was keeping track of the projects and funds.

Interim Town Manager Holley noted that the lack of property taxes next year was a major concern, and he will address the issue next week with legislators.

C. FY24 Budget**FY24 Budget - Discussion of Timeline**

Manager Russ indicated that the property appraiser certified the taxable value of the town on July 1, 2023. She thought the certification would be approximately 30% less than last year. The proposed millage rate had to be set by August 4, 2023, and could be set high because it could always go down. Trim notices were sent out by August 24, 2023, the town had to hold two budget hearings in September and the budget was determined by October 1, 2023. Manager Russ stated that the revenues (in order) came from ad valorem taxes, parking, public service tax, the half-cent sales tax and the communication service tax. She estimated that the refund to property owners for the ad valorem taxes would be about \$300,000.00.

D. Parking App and Fee comparisons**Comparison of local area parking fees**

Community Development Director Steve Poposki reviewed the comparison table of hourly parking fees and violations. The hourly rate was on the upper end, but the violations were on the lower end. The residential permits of \$25.00 were a good deal. He recommended keeping the fees the same and BASE Supervisor Todd Sears agreed. Supervisor Sears explained that the two-hour limit downtown was put in place years ago at the request of the business owners, but it was no longer in effect. Mayor Allers supported keeping the fees in place and indicated that businesses did not favor the two-hour limit. Council Member Woodson questioned whether the graduated violation fees could be lumped into one. Supervisor Sears replied that the system was in place because some violations were more serious than others. Council Member Woodson pointed out that people were still parking on private property and Town Attorney Herin, Jr. replied that the town could not do anything regarding private property. Council Member Woodson suggested that people operating parking lots without permits be shut down and fined. Town Attorney Herin, Jr. responded that Special Magistrate hearings would begin in April. Director Poposki commented that parking was at 90% capacity and Supervisor Sears added that 320 paid parking spaces were open.

Consensus was reached to change all violation fees to a flat rate of \$77.00, \$100.00 after 30 days and increase illegal parking in handicapped spots to \$250.00.

Supervisor Sears described the areas available for residents to park with a permit and indicated residents were provided a map when they purchased the passes.

Mayor Allers noted people complained that the app was not allowing them to add time to the meters before they expired. Supervisor Sears commented that the system worked nine out of ten times and wondered if the problems were operator errors.

Vice Mayor Atterholt questioned whether the available parking app was in place. Supervisor Sears replied that the contract was in effect from August 2022 to August 2023, but nothing was ever set up. Vice Mayor Atterholt questioned whether the town could get a refund. Manager Russ stated the equipment was back ordered, put on hold and the town had not paid anything. The cameras installed before the hurricane would be reimbursed by insurance and reinstalled.

E. Bay Oaks Campus Large Ball Field Repair

Placement of large ballfield and status of Redevelopment Plan for Bay Oaks Campus

Director Culture, Parks & Recreation Alison Giesen indicated the debris would be removed from the ball field soon. She questioned whether Council wanted to move forward with the Redevelopment Plan and a consensus was reached to move forward with the plan. Crowder Gulf will provide an update regarding the soil remediation status at the next meeting.

F. PRESENTATION: Canal Maintenance Program

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Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz utilized PowerPoint for his presentation. Slides included: Fort Myers Beach Waterway Evaluation 2002 and 2003; Funding, Property Owner Support, Navigation, Environment, Spoil Disposal; Gulf of Mexico Aerials; Existing Plan - Site Drainage; Estero Island Aerials and Laguna Channel Post-lan. Town Attorney Herin, Jr. reviewed the history of paying for dredging canals. Previously, some property owners and the town agreed to split costs 50/50, but the project collapsed. Since the town did not regularly maintain the canals in the past, FEMA will not contribute funds for dredging. Town Attorney Herin, Jr. commented that the canals had not been dredged because canal owners refused to pay. Interim Town Manager Wilkins described bonding the revenue stream to dredge the canals and then creating an assessment to pay the town back.

Harbormaster Austin Gilchrist provided a status of the canals and noted there was still a lot of floating debris and damaged seawalls. The depth of some canal entryways had decreased and made barge movement difficult. He noted they took pictures of the canals heavily impacted by debris and put GPS coordinates on large items so the state could remove them. He stated that most of the debris had been removed.

Interim Town Manager Wilkins suggested adding a dredging survey to the website for canal owner input. Council Member King suggested holding a presentation for the public before the survey.

IV. AGENDA MANAGEMENT**A. March 2023**

Add pedestrian overpasses for developments that span Estero Blvd.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Allers moved to adjourn; second by Council Member Woodson.
Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Minutes adopted, April 3, 2023. Motion by Council Member King and seconded by Council Member Woodson. Passed 5-0.



Amy Baker, Town Clerk