

**VERO BEACH UTILITIES COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2022 - 9:30 A.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Chairman, Jane Burton; Vice Chairman and Indian River Shores Representative, Bob Auwaerter; Members: Judy Orcutt, Bill Eggers, Taylor Dingle, and Member at Large, JT Mooney **Also Present:** Water and Sewer Director, Rob Bolton; Finance Director, Cindy Lawson; Public Works Director, Matthew Mitts; City Attorney, John Turner and Deputy City Clerk, Sherri Philo

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called today's meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and the Deputy City Clerk performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) August 9, 2022 – Regular Meeting

Mr. Auwaerter made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2022 Regular Utilities Commission meeting. Mrs. Orcutt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B) September 12, 2022 – Special Call Meeting

Mrs. Orcutt made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2022 Special Call Utilities Commission meeting. Mr. Eggers seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

None

5. OLD BUSINESS

None

6. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

A) Water Reclamation Facility Debt Service Scenarios – Ms. Cindy Lawson / Requested by Mrs. Jane Burton

Mr. Tony Harrison, Vice President of Raftelis Financial Consultants, Inc., who was present via GoToMeeting, said that he gave an in depth presentation on the Utility Rate Study to the Utilities Commission on September 12, 2022, and they discussed what the future rates would need to be in order to fund the projects, especially the Water Reclamation Facility. The question came up on what if the costs of the facility was \$10 million higher or \$10

million lower. He then gave a Power Point presentation on the Water Reclamation Facility Debt Scenarios, with Scenario 1 being \$10 million higher and Scenario 2 being \$10 million lower (attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Auwaerter went over his handout on the Impact on Wastewater Rates due to Changes in Vero Beach WRF Construction Cost with the Commission members (attached to the original minutes). He wanted to make sure that when this goes before the City Council and they are voting on it that they understand the big hit that the ratepayers are going to take.

The Chairman opened and closed public comments at 9:46 a.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

B) Update on Stormwater Utility ERU Assessment Roll – Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director / Requested by Mrs. Jane Burton

Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director, reported that the City Council voted to adopt a stormwater assessment of \$7.00 per ERU. She said this would generate about \$100,000 in revenue. She said this went out with the tax bills and the City has started receiving some of the Stormwater Utility revenues.

The Chairman opened and closed public comments at 9:47 a.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

C) Update on Water and Sewer Projects - Mr. Rob Bolton, Water and Sewer Director / Requested by Mrs. Jane Burton

Mr. Rob Bolton, Water and Sewer Director, gave an update on the Water Reclamation Facility. He reported that staff is meeting weekly with the Consultants and would probably have the final sign off on the site plan that would show the way out of the Plant itself. He explained that the basis of the design is access to the Plant, access for an operator to walk around, where the electrical layouts would be, different types of access from a storm standpoint, etc. He said they spoke with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding a preliminary design report so they could issue the City a permit. He explained that they would still have to do the final plans, but the permit would allow them to seek grants during the next grant cycle. They are still on schedule to go out to bid in 2023. He said they are anticipating the bidding process to take four (4) to six (6) months, which would put them in the first quarter of 2024 to start construction.

Mr. Mooney said in looking at the valuation some of the costs are for improvements that you would not necessarily see, such as getting the Lagoon and the environment clean. He felt that was something that the City should use in explaining these costs.

Mr. Eggers felt that they were actively trying to evaluate what is the benefit of cleaning the water or storing water and not releasing it into the Lagoon. There is a definite value that is not captured in these numbers.

Mr. Mooney thought that costs borne by the citizens makes a difference to people. He said there are rising costs everywhere and people are seeing them when they go shopping or when they gas up their vehicles. But this is a cost that he would imagine the City Council was going to try to sell to the public. If they are going to be successful they should try to capture that.

Mr. Eggers said you can put a number on things, such as property values. But he questioned the value of manatees or seagrass. He said the main thing they struggle with is what is the cost of doing nothing.

Mr. Bolton noted that there is no “do nothing.” He said about two (2) years ago the cost was \$38 million to upgrade things on the existing site or go off site at a price of \$50 million. He said that \$50 million did two (2) things. It got the Plant off the water and it got them better treatment at a new facility with the ability to expand.

Mr. Mooney felt that educating the people was very important.

The Chairman opened and closed public comments at 10:19 a.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

Mr. Bolton gave a brief update on the Main Canal stormwater project. He reported that they would probably start construction on the canal site sometime in January. The structure would be built at a prefab company and they would ship it here to be installed, which should be sometime in January.

Mr. Bolton referred to the pipeline that would run from the facility to Johns Island. He reported that they were looking at repurposing part of the 16-inch line that is currently there for the stormwater canal, which would save \$400,000 to \$500,000 in costs that would have occurred by building another 16-inch line. He stated that they submitted for permitting from the County and the County sent back comments, which were addressed and resubmitted.

The Chairman opened and closed public comments at 10:31 a.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

D) Update on Stormwater Utilities – Mr. Matt Mitts, Public Works Director / Requested by Mrs. Jane Burton

Mr. Matthew Mitts, Public Works Director, said last week they received a lot of rain and there were areas in the City that flooded that took him by surprise because the rainfall numbers and the areas that flooded didn't add up. Another issue is that they are seeing a lot more tidal flooding. During Hurricane Ian they had tidal flooding on Indian River Drive East, which was another surprise to him. He then showed on the screen pictures of the inside of a pipe that takes the runoff from Miracle Mile and the runoff from U.S.1 all the way to City Hall where the railroad tracks are located (attached to the original minutes). He said the photographs show some type of calcified material in it and this is the first time that he has seen this. He wanted to highlight one of the benefits of the utility because this is something that they can get in front of and not respond reactively to.

Mr. Mitts reported that a big topic of discussion when discussing the stormwater fee was mitigation credits. He said as they go into policy discussions during this budget cycle they would be discussing mitigation credit policy.

Mrs. Orcutt said going back to Mr. Mooney's point about how important public education is to make people understand the value of what people are paying for, she felt that stormwater was an even bigger problem. She said the entire City of Vero Beach was pretty

much in a flood plain. She said there is a need for additional funding for the Stormwater Utility. What they are getting now is not sufficient to address the problem.

Mr. Eggers said that he is not in a flood plain, but his yard flooded. He said that when he was driving around he noticed that all the canals were full so the water wasn't moving through the system at a rate where his yard would not flood.

Ms. Lawson thought the point that Mrs. Orcutt was making was that by reducing the Stormwater Utility assessment to \$7.00, what they were generating was about \$100,000 a year out of a million that is in the Stormwater Utility budget for the base maintenance. She said this summer they would be discussing how they were going to fund the Stormwater Utility in future years.

The Chairman opened public comments at 10:51 a.m.

Mr. Keith Drewett said this is a substantial system. He said last year's discussions ended with essentially a band aid. He encouraged the City Council to try to get into this before the budget cycle because the budget cycle tends to be very busy.

The Chairman closed public comments at 10:53 a.m., with no one else wishing to be heard.

7. MEMBER'S MATTERS

A) Discussion of Master Stormwater Plan – Requested by Mrs. Judy Orcutt

Mr. Mitts gave a brief update on the progress of the Stormwater Master Plan.

The Chairman opened and closed public comments at 11:03 a.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

B) Report on Wastewater and Stormwater Improvement Submitted by the City of Vero Beach - Mr. Rob Bolton, Water and Sewer Director and Mr. Matt Mitts, Public Works Director / Requested by Mrs. Judy Orcutt

Mrs. Orcutt wanted to preference this issue by reminding everyone that they have a Basin Management Action Plan, which seems to be failing. She said the Plan is not working because seagrass has not been restored yet. She said two (2) of the big issues that they need to pay attention to is stormwater and wastewater. She was surprised to learn that the Legislature realized this and asked that all cities and counties turn in a needs assessment for stormwater and wastewater. She asked Mr. Bolton and Mr. Mitts what the City submitted.

Mr. Mitts and Mr. Bolton gave a brief overview of the 20-year Needs Analysis for stormwater and wastewater that was submitted to Indian River County to submit to the State.

Mrs. Orcutt asked if the logistics have been worked out with Indian River County and with Indian River Shores.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, reported that they were close to agreeing on the franchise terms with Indian River County. They have also reached an agreement with Indian River Shores.

The Chairman opened and closed public comments at 11:24 a.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

8. CLERK'S MATTERS

A) Cancellation of December and January Meetings Because of Renovations to the Council Chambers

Ms. Sherri Philo, Deputy City Clerk, reported that the Utilities Commission would not be meeting the months of December and January because the Council Chambers would be closed for renovations.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

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