



# Ocala

## City Council: Work Session

### Minutes

110 SE Watula Avenue  
Ocala, FL 34471

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**Tuesday, September 26, 2023**

**12:00 PM**

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#### **Strategic Planning Session Updates**

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

**Present:** Mayor Reuben Kent Guinn  
Pro Tem Barry Mansfield  
Council Member Kristen M. Dreyer  
Council Member Jay A. Musleh  
Council Member Ire J. Bethea Sr  
Council President James P. Hilty Sr

Municipal Officers/Others Present: The meeting was also attended by City Manager Peter Lee, City Attorney William Sexton, Assistant City Manager Ken Whitehead, City Clerk Angel Jacobs, Fire Chief Clint Welborn, Police Chief Michael Balken, Internal Auditor Randall Bridgeman, Assistant Finance Director Peter Brill, City Projects Director Tye Chighizola, Marketing & Communication Manager Ashley Dobbs, Community Outreach Manager Rachel Fautsch, HR/Risk Management Director Devan Kikendall, Director Economic Development Aubrey Hale, Budget Director Tammi Haslam, Planning Director Patricia Hitchcock, City Engineer & Director of Water Resources Sean Lanier, Chief Financial Officer Janice Mitchell, Director of Public Works Darren Park, Director of Electric Utility Doug Peebles, Director of Telecommunications Mel Poole, Director of Parks & Recreation Preston Pooser, Assistant Director, Cyber & Physical Security Christopher Ramos, Strategic & Legislative Affairs Administrator Jeannine Robbins, Procurement & Contracting Officer Daphne Robinson, Growth Management Director Jeff Shrum, Community Engagement Coordinator Ramona Williams, Chief of Staff Chris Watt, Ocala Police Dept Representative, IT Representative, The Press and other interested parties.

**3. Public Notice**

**4. Topics for Discussion**

**4a. Strategic Planning Session Updates**

City Manager Pete Lee referred to the nine priorities that were discussed at the April Strategic Planning Session. He noted an affordable housing update workshop occurred in July, and surplus lots were reviewed with Council at the previous City Council meeting.

Jeff Shrum reviewed 2050 plan as a key project for staff. Requests for Proposals were issued July 25, 2023 and will be presented to council soon. He discussed the goal of ensuring public involvement and feedback in the plan, incorporating a

consultant to be more of a support role to staff. The RFP selection committee met September 13th. The plan will be to utilize the 2050 Leadership Team in the process. The goal will be to keep Council updated.

City Manager Pete Lee added it must be a community vision, as broad economically and socially as possible. He stated it is more of a physical plan/approach over policy, focusing on improvements on connections to and within the downtown, as well as updating the gateways to the city are important such as those in West Ocala.

Director of Community Development Services James Haynes reported on the affordable housing initiative team. They have met three times since April and have identified three major areas to focus on: sourcing qualified builders, finding income-qualified persons into these units, and ensuring affordability of the subject property for 20 years. Currently, Procurement has begun to source builders. The Community Development Services department has created an application process for builders to be considered for reimbursement for certain fees when building affordable units. He displayed a map of first 61 properties that have been listed, with a majority located in west Ocala.

Mr. Haynes stated it is important that potential buyers are income-qualified. He noted the City does not currently have the resources to perform the tasks associated with ensuring this requirement for the builders. He is working on updating the City's code to amend affordable housing ordinance, section 106-102, which allows for liens to ensure affordability for no more than 10 years, with 10% forgiven annually. They are looking to increase to a 20-year term, with 5% forgiveness annually. AMI will change from 80% to 120%. The expected timeline for the proposed amendment is introduction October 3, with an October 17 adoption date. He commented the department is also working on a HUD grant application that will be brought to Council in the near future.

City Manager Pete Lee commented on the technical term "affordable", and noted workforce housing and housing within the 120% to 200% AMI range is very difficult to obtain currently due to a lack of supply within the range.

President Hilty questioned if the use of a land trust is a viable option. Mr. Haynes explained there is a land trust in Marion County currently with Habitat for Humanity, but he is unsure if City properties can be part of that trust. If City properties can be, he suggested using the land trust currently in place. President Hilty commented the Live Local Act has a 30-year affordability clause and questioned if the term is required, or if the City should adopt that term. Mr. Haynes stated 30-year affordability was considered and felt it was a big jump from 10 to 20, but 30 years is considerable.

President Hilty questioned if the restrictions on builders for these properties will cause any issues. Mr. Haynes responded the builders will have all of the information on restrictions and regulations as the process begins, noting that some already have experience building with Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Lee agreed it is a limiting factor, but he believes the program will have success with City guidance.

Council Member Dreyer questioned the level of the City's participation in the process as well as minimizing the cost to the smaller builders. Mr. Haynes commented the City will be monitoring the builds, but handling and monitoring it would be against HUD guidelines. A lot of multifamily builders are already versed in the affordability rules, but he acknowledged smaller builders will face some challenges he hopes the City will be able to minimize; however, staffing considerations will need to be kept in mind.

Mr. Lee explained City staff will be able to assist with guiding builders through the affordable housing ordinance and income qualifying information.

Ms. Dreyer clarified she was only considering the 61 properties on the map. Mr. Haynes agreed CDS would be helping to manage those properties' builds. Mr. Lee commented a couple of years ago, the lots were not very attractive to builders, but many are now. He stated some lots will likely receive multiple bids, and commencement and completion dates will be specified in the contracts. Mr. Haynes explained a difficult part of the process will be finding an income-qualified person or family for each property.

President Hilty commented the Live Local Act seems to have some opportunities for the City. Mr. Haynes agreed, but commented a lot of the funding is already accounted for through the SHIP program and others.

Budget Director Tammi Haslam reported on budget-long term planning. Staff has agreed on reactivating the Finance Committee. The first meeting is scheduled for October 19. They have created a budget variance report within Munis, reviewed existing five-year capital plan document, and are developing training for fiscal staff.

Assistance Director of Finance Peter Brill reviewed revenue enhancements through grants, assessments, receivable collections and a review of fees, and expenditure decreases, such as reuse of City assets, task outsourcing and software, for consideration.

Growth Management Director Jeff Shrum discussed streamlining the building, permitting and inspection processes. They are in the process of updating applications and forms used within the department, the Growth Management webpages on the City website. In the short term, lobby management is being reviewed, adding in workstations to allow contractors to complete permit paperwork, as well as increasing front-end staff. He discussed permitting software upgrades. In the long term, he discussed inspection process goals, application navigator, and one stop permitting. Mr. Shrum briefly spoke on outreach activities such as the Builders' Breakfasts and monthly meetings with MCBIA board. There are future plans for quarterly meetings with other professionals/consultants as well. Council Member Mansfield stated improvements have been made in the Building Department and commented it is very important to keep that professional touch.

Community Development Services Director James Haynes spoke on Homeless Prevention. New HMIS software was implemented September 8th and staff is seeing the benefits in the new software. Recently, there have been 23 homeless diversions. In the

last year and a half working with Ocala housing authority, staff has been able to permanently house 46 families with emergency vouchers. As well, there have been 245 housing referrals, 162 employment referrals, and 79 homeless resolutions. Starting January 2024, staff will present updates to Council on homeless prevention on a quarterly basis.

Council Member Dreyer questioned what was done differently to house 46 families permanently housed as to what was done in the past. Mr. Haynes explained OHA's vouchers were higher than usual, and City and OHA staff were able to find landlords willing to take the risk.

Council Member Mansfield asked about other needs beyond housing. Mr. Haynes discussed ways staff ensures people get the information they need for social security, veteran assistance, workforce placement, and others. Mr. Mansfield wondered if there was a way the City could connect the 46 families with the affordable housing builders discussed earlier. Mr. Hilty discussed concerns associated with that, and Mr. Lee noted they didn't want to set anyone up for failure. Council Member Dreyer noted homeownership is expensive, citing examples such as costs associated with replacing an air conditioner or roof insurance.

Council Member Bethea expressed his concerns with a land trust; the homeowner never owns the land.

Chief Financial Officer Janice Mitchell discussed public safety, including modified notification to OPD and OFR for planned developments. Police and Fire developed a long-term needs list and are working to prioritize and determine estimates. The departments are researching best practices for staffing levels. She discussed a potential First Responder Training Campus, noting staff is currently evaluating of what to include and next steps.

Human Resources/Risk Management Director Devan Kikendall discussed employee engagement strategies. Employee Academy, similar to Citizens Academy, would allow staff to rotate through City departments and occur over several weeks. The annual supervisors' training conference in April received positive feedback. She reviewed potential daycare benefits for employees.

Strategic and Legislative Affairs Administrator Jeannine Robbins reviewed the Team Engagement survey results, noting results were above the national average of satisfaction, and introduced Council to the updated Key Performance Indicators dashboard.

Keith Fair, Housing Finance Authority of Marion County, discussed the bond program, highlighting savings available in financing. He explained the HFA has retained the Florida Housing Coalition to develop a land trust for rentals only.

President Hilty adjourned the meeting at 1:34pm.

**5. Adjournment**

1:34 pm