110 SE Watula Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471

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Ocala

City Council: Work Session

Minutes

Tuesday, June 27, 2023 **1:00 PM**

Fire Assessment Study

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Present: Pro Tem Barry Mansfield
Council Member Kristen M. Dreyer
Council Member Ire J. Bethea Sr
Council President James P. Hilty Sr

Excused: Mayor Reuben Kent Guinn
Council Member Jay A. Musleh

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, Internal Auditor Randall Bridgeman, Budget Director Tammi Haslam, Chief Financial Officer Janice Mitchell, Strategic & Legislative Affairs Administrator Jeannine Robbins, Chief of Staff Chris Watt, IT Representative and other interested parties.

3. Public Notice

Public Notice for the June 27, 2023 City Council Work Session Meeting was posted on June 15, 2023

4. Public Comments

5. Topics for Discussion

a. Fire Assessment Study

Megan Camp discussed the fire assessment study. She provided a brief overview of the following: fire assessment methodology, assessable budget (81% non-ALS), assessable budget determination ($18 million), assessable budget comparison, distribution of non-ALS incidents (residential 51% and non-residential 48%), land use, calculated assessment rates (residential, non-residential tiers, and vacant land). She requested feedback from Council regarding the calculations. A draft technical report will be presented to Council. The adoption of the preliminary resolution is scheduled on July 18, 2023. Furthermore, the public hearing is scheduled on September 12, 2023. She clarified the difference between the past fire user fee and fire assessment with Council Member Mansfield.

Budget Director Tammi Haslam commented the assessment process is defined in the Florida Statutes. To note, the past fire user fee lacked compliance with the Statute.

Susan Schollete-Gumm stated the fire assessment is a lucrative revenue source in the State of Florida. The fire assessment has a strong legal foundation compared to the fire user fee, established by Home Rule Authority to levy a fee, which was not adopted and lacked caselaw support.

Ms. Haslam confirmed the City is only collecting $9.2 million, not the fully assessable budget ($18 million).

City Attorney Sexton explained the law requires the City to follow the methodology to collect a fire assessment. Council can agree to make up the General Fund difference to lower the collected amount.

Ms. Camp confirmed the Fire Department agreed with the methodology in year 2021.

Ms. Schollete-Gumm stated the preliminary resolution will establish the maximum rates that will be noticed on the TRIM and newspaper. Furthermore, Council can lower the assessable budget during the annual resolution adoption.

Ms. Haslam stated the City will receive State revenues and final taxable values on July 1, 2023. The City needs to submit a TRIM insert to the Property Appraiser on June 28th. She requested Council consider using the fully assessable value, until the City presents rates on July 18, 2023.

Council agreed on using the fully assessable value.

6. Adjournment

Adjourned at 1:20 pm

Minutes

James P. Hilty Sr. Council President	Angel B. Jacobs City Clerk