

Special City Commission Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2020

(Draft)

This meeting was conducted virtually via tele conference in accordance with Executive Order No. 20-69, issued by the Office of Governor Ron Desantis on March 20, 2020, extended by Executive Order No. 20-112, and further extended by Executive Order No. 20-114, allowing municipalities to conduct meetings of their governing boards without having a quorum of its members present physically or at any specific location, and utilizing communications media technology such as telephonic or video conferencing, as provided by Section 120.54(5)(b)2, Florida Statutes.

5/15/2020 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fultz called the meeting to order at approximately 5:01 p.m.

Mayor Fultz read a statement:

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 20-69, issued by the Office of Governor Ron DeSantis on March 20, 2020, extended by Executive Order No. 20-112, and further extended by Executive Order No. 20-114, municipalities may conduct meetings of their governing boards without having a quorum of its members present physically or at any specific location, and utilizing communications media technology such as telephonic or video conferencing, as provided by Section 120.54(5)(b)2, Florida Statutes.

Procedures for public participation will be explained by the City Attorney shortly.

Albert Galloway, Jr., City Attorney, read a statement on Procedures for Virtual Public Meetings.

Mr. Galloway asked the Commissioners, "are you comfortable with all the notice provisions set forth and these uniform rules of procedures we have established for this Virtual meeting? The Commissioners answered affirmatively.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Eugene Fultz - Mayor, Curtis Gibson, Terrye Howell, Al Goldstein, Robin Gibson

Staff Present: Kenneth Fields, City Manager; Albert C. Galloway, Jr., City Attorney; Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk

3. COVID-19 Update

Joe Jenkins, Fire Chief and Emergency Operations Director, reported that not all of the numbers are in for today but as of now Polk County has 716 cases an increase of 18 from yesterday. Lake Wales has 42 cases. He does not have zip code information yet. There have been 40 deaths in Polk County.

Kenneth Fields, City Manager, said that there are three meetings scheduled for next week. The CRA Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday at 5:30 pm. He recommends canceling this as there are no items for the agenda.

There is the regular City Commission meeting on Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. There are several administrative items on the agenda for this meeting.

Then there is the budget priority setting workshop scheduled for May 21. This meeting usually has a lot of public input. He recommended postponing the meeting to Thursday June 4, 2020. This will allow more time to learn what may happen in regards to our revenues for next year.

For the regular City Commission meeting he recommends that it continue to be a virtual meeting. Mr. Fields

recommended some safe guidelines that we could follow if the Commission returns to in-person meetings. Chief Jenkins suggested three seats apart in the chambers every other row. As our numbers are going up and we have a positive case in an Assisted Living Facility. He recommended continuing with a virtual meeting on May 19th.

Commissioner Goldstein said that many areas in the state are opening and getting back to business and we need to get back to business. Elected officials need to lead and quiet the fears of our community. Many doctors and health experts agree that we need to open up. We knew the infection rates would rise when there will be more testing. We are not getting participation from the community during these meetings. He said he isn't sure that many people watch it on tv. The meetings could be held at the Austin Center for more space.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson said that according to the CDC we needed a 14 day decline before beginning phase 1 of reopening. He asked if we know what our trend has been. Chief Jenkins said he doesn't believe we are in a decline. At the moment the trend has been flat or the same. Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson said we need to be careful of political opinions or agendas. He said he would prefer to stick with the CDC guidelines. He does not want to delay the budget planning. This needs to be done on schedule.

Mr. Fields reviewed the budget schedule including the hard deadlines including the passing of the not-to-exceed millage rate in July. The budget hearings in September are also hard deadlines. Adjusting the date for the Priorities workshop will not delay us by much.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson said we will need time to fully consider this budget as there will be some difficult decisions.

Commissioner Terrye Howell asked if the body cameras will be discussed at the June 4th workshop. Mr. Fields confirmed this. Commissioner Howell asked if there are any hot topics for Tuesday's meeting. Mr. Fields said no. If something becomes controversial then it can be deferred. Commissioner Howell said she would be fine with an in person meeting with social distancing measures in place.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson said we recently had the Food Truck Rally in Lake Wales Park with crowds. The Governor has allowed restaurants and hair salons to open. He is fine if some wish to remain home and protect themselves. Some cities such as Haines City are conducting public meetings and opening City Hall. Other cities are having public commission meetings. He agreed with Commissioner Goldstein on the idea of using the Austin Center. Not everyone has internet access. He asked about possibility of a combined virtual meeting so people can participate either way. Mr. Fields said we are exploring this. Not all the issues with it are solved. We would not be able to broadcast meetings at the Austin Center and the audio quality tends to be poor. By June 2 we could have issues with a hybrid virtual - in person meeting resolved.

Mayor Fultz said choice is important. He is in several high risk groups. He agrees with going by CDC guidelines. He is satisfied with this format. His safety is important. A hybrid meeting would be fine until we see a 14 day decline. He is concerned about the safety of citizens especially seniors

Mr. Fields reviewed the challenges of a possible hybrid meeting especially making sure the video and audio is in sync.

Commissioner Goldstein agreed with going to hybrid meetings. We are essentially doing one now. He said he prefers to start these on May 19. These could be done at the Austin Center.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson reported that the Governor is allowing gyms, libraries and museums to reopen. He agrees that everyone should have a choice. Mayor Fultz said some leaders are not following CDC guidelines.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson said he has no objection to moving the CRA meeting to June 9th. As the next Commission meeting is 4 days away he will move to have that one virtually as not much will change over 4 days. The budget workshop is critical and will move to change the date to June 4th. This will give our IT staff

a chance to work on this.

He asked for a consensus to move the CRA meeting to June 9.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson made a motion to hold the May 19th meeting electronically. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion.

By voice vote:

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson "YES"

Commissioner Howell "YES"

Commissioner Goldstein "YES"

Commissioner Curtis Gibson "YES"

Mayor Fultz "YES"

Motion passed 5-0.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson made a motion to move the meeting of the budget workshop from May 21st to June 4th with no decision as to the format yet. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion.

By voice vote:

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson "YES"

Commissioner Howell "YES"

Commissioner Goldstein "YES"

Commissioner Curtis Gibson "YES"

Mayor Fultz "YES"

Motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson asked about when they will decide on the format for the budget workshop. Mr. Fields said that if they figure out a way to do the June 2nd Commission Meeting in some sort of hybrid format then they will have the June 4th meeting in the same format.

Commissioner Howell said that she would prefer to participate in the hybrid meetings remotely. She respects the choice of others to participate in person.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson said he is fine either way but understands the need to have people come in to the meetings. We should be consistent in our messaging concerning the risks.

4. COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

None

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk

DRAFT