

**City Commission Budget Workshop
Meeting Minutes
June 3, 2020
(Approved)**

6/3/2020 - Minutes

1. ROLL CALL

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

Staff Present: James Slaton, Interim City Manager; Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk

Mayor Fultz called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

2.I. City Commission Budgetary Process – Fiscal Year 2020'21

[Begin Agenda Memo]

SUBJECT: City Commission Budgetary Process – Fiscal Year 2020'21

SYNOPSIS: The City of Lake Wales budgetary calendar for Fiscal Year 2020'21.

BACKGROUND In accordance with Florida State Statute 166.241, each municipality shall make provision for establishing a fiscal year budget for the period beginning October 1st of each year and ending September 30th of the following year. As the City Commission beings this annual process, it is customary for the City Commission to first hold “priority setting workshops” so that the Commissioners may discuss, as a governing board, their priorities relating to community level of service, special projects, and future capital outlay.

- 05/21/2020 - City Commission Meeting - Budgetary Fiscal Year 2019'20 priority setting workshop.

Other Important Budgetary Dates Include:

- 06/01/2020 – Property Appraiser – June 1st Estimate of Taxable Value

- 07/01/2020 – Property Appraiser – July 1st Certification Date for Preliminary Tax Roll (TRIM Day 1)

- 07/09/2020 – City Commission Meeting Budget Workshop #1 ? 07/21/2020 – City Commission Meeting Interim Millage Rate – Approved by City Commission (TRIM)

- 08/04/2020 – Must notify Property Appraiser Office (2pm) of:

1. Interim Millage Rate

2. Current year rolled-back rate

3. Date, time & place of 1st budget hearings

- 08/13/2020 – City Commission Meeting Budget Workshop #2

- 09/9/2020 – City Commission Meeting

1. 1 st Reading of ordinance adopting millage rate
2. 1 st Public Hearing, Millage Rate
3. 1 st Reading of ordinance adopting FY 20'21 budget
4. 1 st Public Hearing, FY 20'21 Budget ? 09/18/2020 - Advertisement of FY 20'21 Budget Summary (TRIM Ad) Advertisement of 2nd Public Hearing (State Statutes require the 2nd Public Hearing must be held between 2 and 5 days after advertisement)

- 09/22/2020 – City Commission Meeting

1. 2 nd Reading of ordinance adopting millage rate
2. 2nd Public Hearing, Millage Rate
3. 2nd Reading of ordinance adopting FY 20'21 budget
4. 2nd Public Hearing, FY 20'21 Budget

- 09/25/2020 - Deadline to forward ordinance adopting millage rate to Property Appraiser and Tax Collector

- 10/13/2020 - Within 3 days of receiving notice of final adjusted tax roll, Deadline to certify form DR-422 to Property Appraiser

- 10/15/2020 - Deadline to forward Certificate of Compliance (DR-487) to Department of Revenue. Within 30 days after final hearing

[End Agenda Memo]

James Slaton, Interim City Manager, reviewed this item. Dorothy Abbott, Finance Director, said this is a priority setting workshop where staff will listen to the Commissioners state their priorities. We don't have any numbers yet about revenues.

Commissioner Howell said we should only purchase essential items. No wish list items this year. She said one item that may be essential to the health and welfare of our community is body cameras. She suggested cutting some purchases in half. We need to finish refurbishing the YMCA.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson said he would like body cameras to be a priority. We need to keep the upcoming hurricane season in mind.

Commissioner Goldstein said he was against cameras. He has spoken with police officers from other departments and cameras and related record keeping are expensive. They do not solve problems. Many organizations are against these cameras. He would like to reinvest in Community Policing. We need to learn to respect each other. He will hold off on the rest of his items until we have more information. Ms. Abbott encouraged all the Commissioners to state their needs. Commissioner Goldstein said we need more police officers as our city grows.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson said he would like to not increase the millage rate. If we can maintain where we are that would be an achievement. He spoke against body cameras as they are a symbol of distrust. We need to rebuild trust with our citizens. The CRA and Dover Kohl plan are a priority for him. This will set our community apart. He would like a 5 year plan that keeps rotating. We will need to discuss how to finance these improvements. We can be aggressive in the CRA budget.

Mayor Fultz said that now is not a good time for body cams. They will not solve the problem. We need to put them on hold for now. He agreed with leaving the millage rate at the rollback rate to encourage new businesses and residents. He would like screens in front of the Commission instead of behind. He would like to see numbers before adding to the wish list.

Dorothy Abbott, Finance Director, said she isn't worried yet and isn't scared. This city has grown for the past seven years. There will be room in the budget for cuts and what they would like to see. A draft will be available in July for review. It will be discussed in August. Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson said interest rates are great for borrowing money. Ms. Abbott said it may take 3 years for us to recover economically. This problem will be ongoing. Mayor Fultz expressed confidence in Ms. Abbott and the staff they they will get the City through this.

James Slaton, Interim City Manager, said we will be conservative this year but still get some things done.

Commissioner Howell said she heard 2 nos on the body cams which she understands. One commissioner is looking to wait and see. We need to make our leadership in the City better. The body cams are on her wish list. Not every area needs body cams. The same things are going on and will not change. Not every officer needs cameras so that our officers will conduct themselves as they should. The people in her neighborhood, regular ordinary people, are tired of being mistreated.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson said he agreed with Commissioner Howell and said that we need more community policing and we need body cams. They work in Palatka and other cities. Not all officers are bad. He is pro law enforcement. Everyone needs to be treated fairly criminal or not. We need transparency.

Mayor Fultz said he spends time in northwest area and he talks to people. He has been the target of mistreatment. He knows there is mistreatment going on. Issues with an officer or two should be addressed. He agreed that the body cams are an indication of mistrust and won't solve the problem. Commissioner Howell asked the Mayor and other commissioners to direct staff to do the right thing.

Chris Velasquez, Police Chief, said that he instructs his staff to treat everyone fairly and that there have been many conversations about this with City Management. There are mixed messages coming from people that makes things difficult. People are being legitimately stopped. We should not listen to criminals. People are saying things that are out of line and second guessing what we do. We have not had significant complaints or concerns. He expects officers to ask those that are stopped if they have drugs, weapons or if they are on probation. Commissioner Howell said that should not happen in Lake Wales. Chief Velasquez said that happens in Lake Wales, in other cities, in Polk County and throughout Florida. That's how we do our jobs. There's a way to do that in a professional and respectful manner. They did not get complaints. It's not inappropriate. They have reached out to those who had concerns at the workshop. He shared examples of how they conduct their stops. Videos from body cams are kept for 3 months. Body cams will not help in some of the examples that were given. Some of our community leaders need to stand up for what's right. If they can't do that they shouldn't be leaders. Many in the northwest community appreciate the police and thank them for being there. Those in jail aren't happy to be there and don't feel they should be there. The Commission should not believe that they don't deserve to be there.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson said most officers conduct themselves appropriately but not all behave as they are instructed. He said we need some kind of complaint system where they can be tracked.

Chief Velasquez said there are State Statutes concerning a complaint policy. They are trying to do their job. We have to do things correctly. Commissioner Curtis Gibson asked if complaints go to him, Chief Velasquez, automatically. Chief Velasquez said yes by law.

Commissioner Goldstein said he is in favor of the entire community. The Northwest area is not separate from the rest of the City. He has spent time in that area. If people have concerns they can bring them to the Commission. Residents in his neighborhood complain about the police too.

Commissioner Howell said this behavior will continue unless the Commission gets together. She would like to invite Sara Jones to come and speak on this issue.

Sara Jones, resident, said body cams are not the complete solution to the problem. She said she believes the Chief in what he says. We need better training on how to deal with communities of color. She said there are 2 officers that are problematic and training won't help them. She said this issue will keep resurfacing. She does not believe that several people are telling the same lie. The northwest area needs the same opportunity for growth as other parts of the City. The City needs to take responsibility on this issue.

Mayor Fultz recommended a sit down meeting with the Chief and City Manager might help resolve these issues.

Commissioner Goldstein said that as we are the elected officials and we must take the lead on this and reestablish the advisory committee. We need to address this so we are not still talking about this years from now. Mayor Fultz said the committee can be reinstated later.

Chief Velasquez said all the complaints mentioned at the workshop have been followed up on. Some are not recent and not the fault of the Lake Wales Police Department. Not a single one of the 14 complaints could be substantiated. They will do the job they are expected to do no matter what. Ms. Jones is a defense attorney and posts negative comments on social media.

Mayor Fultz asked Mr. Slaton to set up a meeting or mediation to address these concerns.

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Chris Lutton, resident, requested leaving the millage rate the same. City Personnel has increased over the past several years. He asked about any planned pay raises. He expressed concerns about annual costs of City debt.

Sara Jones, resident speaking on behalf of the Lincoln Avenue CDC, asked about a possible staff person for the northwest area.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson expressed support for a staff person for Northwest area. Mayor Fultz agreed.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson recommended independent reviews of complaints at the Police Department.

Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson said the format of the meeting went well and audio worked well.

James Slaton, Interim City Manager, said he is hearing the discussion on the Police and body cams issue and will have discussions on this and will work on it.

Mr. Slaton said the next budget workshop scheduled on July 9th needs to be rescheduled. He reported on upcoming Dover-Kohl workshop.

Commissioner Goldstein encouraged community unity.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk