

**SPECIAL CALL CITY COUNCIL MINUTES  
TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2021 4:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Brackett went over the process for today's meeting. He expressed that this was a public meeting. The applicants will be asked to go upstairs and wait until their name is called to be interviewed. All applicants are invited to attend the meeting once they have been interviewed.

Mr. Brian Heady understood that it could be perceived as an advantage if someone was to hear the questions ahead of time, but as City Council, they need to hear everything. He wants the applicants to hear his answers. He thinks it is an advantage to hear the questions and see how someone reacts. He wanted to see that the applicants remained in the room.

Mayor Brackett explained that they cannot force an applicant to leave the room. They are only asking that they do. He said most questions asked will be similar for each applicant. The applicants followed the Records Clerk up to the conference room and would be called when Council is ready to interview them.

**A) Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Brackett led the Council and the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**B) Roll Call**

Mayor Robbie Brackett, present; Vice Mayor Rey Neville, present; Councilmember Honey Minuse, present and Councilmember Bob McCabe, present **Also Present:** Monte Falls, City Manager; John Turner, City Attorney and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

**2. Interviews of applicants applying for the open seat on the City Council**

**A) Brian Heady**

Mr. Heady asked the Council how many hours they normally spend on this job. The normal time was about 20 hours a week. Mrs. Minuse said that you can be as busy as you want to be. She said that she generally attends all the Committee meetings so averages about 30 hours a week. Mayor Brackett estimated his time to also be around 30 hours a week.

Mr. Heady informed Council that he lives in an art gallery and has sent pictures of it (available in the City Clerk's office).

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Heady about the Three Corners proposal and what changes would he make to it.

Mr. Heady recalled that the City Manager, along with the developer from DPZ put together a plan better known as the "Standing Ovation Plan" and it was met with great reviews. He doesn't think that just because the pandemic was on the horizon when it was presented it should have been thrown out and used for a vote to extend the development.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Heady what his views were on implementing a stormwater utility.

Mr. Heady commented that he has been doing this dance for so long that he is tired of dancing. There have been many plans put together. He said the answer is to stop dumping. He suggested with the old water treatment plant near the Airport that they should stop the water flow at the railroad tracks and treat that water for irrigation for neighborhoods.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Heady for his views on beachside parking.

Mr. Heady commented that there have been many studies done at the beachside regarding parking and they all show the same thing. There are extra parking spaces on the beach. The question and issue is that the extra parking spaces are privately owned. He recalled when there was money from parking impact fees that were not being used the business owners came to the City and said that parking is not needed and they wanted their money back and it was given to them. He said that parking is not something that they should be spending their tax dollars on.

Mr. McCabe asked Mr. Heady what would be the highest priority for City Council at this time.

Mr. Heady said to have a balanced budget.

Mrs. Minuse commented that the City has a Charter and not all municipalities have the same Charter. She asked Mr. Heady if he had any thoughts regarding their Charter and any changes that should be made.

Mr. Heady said that if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

Mayor Brackett asked Mr. Heady how long he has been a resident in Vero Beach.

Mr. Heady said since the late 1980's.

Mayor Brackett asked Mr. Heady if he has run for office before.

Mr. Heady commented that he holds a record for the number of times that he has run for City Council. He has also run for County Commission, the School Board, the House of Representatives and the US Senate. He has even gotten votes for the United States President.

Mayor Brackett asked Mr. Heady what City Boards has he served on. Mr. Heady said the Utilities Commission and the High Speed Railroad Commission.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Heady why he would want to serve in this position at this time.

Mr. Heady said that he wants to serve this position because he cares about this City.

Mr. Heady appreciated the people who put in their names for this position. There are two (2) people that meet the requirements that Council put forth and that is him and Dick Winger. He suggested that the City appoint Mr. Winger for this position and hire him as a consultant to work with the City Manager. They could put him on a retainer basis. He said that Mr. Falls would have no problem working for him.

**B) Richard Winger**

Mr. Winger explained that this is a service that he would like to offer to the City Council. If they appoint him that is fine and if they don't that is fine also. He is 83 years old and has no intention of running again for City Council. He noted that if someone is appointed and they run for City Council that the incumbent usually wins. He ran three (3) times for City Council and the first time he barely beat Mr. Heady and after that he won by a landslide. If he is appointed to the Council he would not be advocating for anything. He would just be the fifth seat at the table and hopes that the fifth seat never has to break a tie. He would like the votes to all be the same. He doesn't like to have long meetings and tries to keep them at two (2) hours. He said in this case he is not being elected by the people to serve so he doesn't have the right to take an adversarial position.

Mr. McCabe asked Mr. Winger what he thought the highest priority is that the City Council should be addressing.

Mr. Winger said that they need to look at having a better budget and what happens to the Three Corners project. He said that people should get what the people want, whatever that is. They don't need to move with the Three Corners in a rapid pace. They need to find out what the people want and the land should be open to everyone. He has no real view on the building whether it stays or goes.

Mrs. Minuse knows that Mr. Winger has had experience serving the City and thanked him for stepping up. She said that there is a Charter review coming up this summer and asked if he had any concerns or recommendations concerning the Charter.

Mr. Winger said that he could not think of anything in particular and felt that the City has been run well because of the success of past Councils.

Mayor Brackett knew that Mr. Winger has served as a Councilmember for six (6) years. He asked him if he was currently serving on any of their advisory boards. Mr. Winger said no and that he wanted to do this service to get him out of the house. He has an interest in the City and the Lagoon because it makes this City a special place.

Mayor Brackett asked Mr. Winger what made him decide to be an applicant for this available seat.

Mr. Winger said that it would be an outside interest that he could do in a few hours and that he loves this City. He is a finance guy and interested in the budget.

Mayor Brackett questioned Mr. Winger about having a platform. He knows what his position is on stormwater. He has heard Mr. Winger say that he regretted not getting the stormwater utility passed when he was on Council. He asked if that position has changed.

Mr. Winger said if the City Council's position was taken to a vote not to go forward with this, his last vote would also be not to go forward with it. He said what he is offering is his knowledge and expertise and not his personal contribution. He would not let his personal views get in the way of what is good for the City.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Winger if he thought that there was a parking problem on the beach and if so, how would he solve it.

Mr. Winger said that there is plenty of parking on the beach, but it is privately owned. He doesn't have a solution. In the longer term a solution has to be found. There are 62 or more parking spots on the side streets, which wouldn't solve the problem for very long. He said in the long run they should continue trying to access those private parking spaces or substantially build a parking garage by Ocean Grill or where Humiston Park is. The City is a wonderful place and it is prosperous. He said as they develop and get better and bigger they will have to face things like this parking.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Winger for his thoughts on the twin pairs.

Mr. Winger said that discussion of the twin pairs has been going on since he was on the Finance Commission. He doesn't know what the right thing to do is; if they should cut back the lanes and get more parking, or leave it the way it is.

### **C) Christopher Drake**

Mr. Drake briefly gave his background. He said that he has been coming to Vero Beach for many years and he finally moved here permanently in 2018 after he retired. He resided in New York as a Police Officer and did a lot of government work in his job. In his job he had the ability to see everything across the board and worked for many different facets. He also worked for many different segments of government. He came here today with an unbiased opinion and has not had any history working with the City itself.

Mayor Brackett asked Mr. Drake if he is not chosen for this position would he be willing to serve on one of their Advisory Boards. Mr. Drake answered yes.

Mrs. Minuse asked Mr. Drake what are some of the biggest concerns that he sees in Vero Beach.

Mr. Drake named some of the things that he saw as big concerns. He said the Three Corners project, the twin pairs, the Airport, the Marina and stormwater. He is trying to be objective on all of these issues and wants the City to follow the best path forward. He has come in with an unbiased opinion and is looking at these things objectively. They need to look at the one-hundred year plan and what's going to be the infrastructure down the road and cost to maintain it. The Three Corners project is the gateway for people to come over and use the beach. The post pandemic design caught his eye and some of the ideas that were in the plan were interesting. How do we do this effectively without taxpayers bearing the brunt of it. He worked with a defense contractor and found out that doing an effective job and doing it more efficiently is important. When talking about the twin pairs they want to be smart on how they use their money and wait for the Florida Department of Transportation to pay for some of the costs.

Mrs. Minuse asked him about the City's Charter and if there was anything in the Charter that he would recommend be changed.

Mr. Drake said that he has not spent a lot of time looking at the Charter. He said that things that were looked at in the Charter years ago might not apply today.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Drake how he views managing growth and what would happen in 10 or 20 years if growth is not managed.

Mr. Drake recalled there was a town in New York that he was familiar with that offered a lot of incentives for people to come in and develop. People wanted that City to grow and become the County seat.

However, once the tax advantages and incentives stopped there was trouble. He said a long term plan is important.

Mr. McCabe thanked Mr. Drake for wanting to get involved in the community. He said after listening to his background that he has a lot to offer to the community. He asked him what he thought was the highest priority that Council needs to be looking at right now.

Mr. Drake commented that they could make some good investments with the Three Corners project. He said that they need to have people come into the community and spend their money to keep businesses alive. He thought that the repairs needed at the Marina were important. He expressed the need to support the local economy.

#### **D) Taylor Dingle**

Mr. Dingle thanked the Council for their time and consideration and he is honored to be considered for this position. He has been involved in the community for the last couple of years. He provides a youthful insight for younger people. He doesn't have a five (5) page resume, like Mr. Winger does, but hopefully one day he will. He has been involved in many political committees here in Indian River County and he works for the Clerk of Courts office in St. Lucie County.

Mr. Neville mentioned some of the many issues that they are facing in Vero Beach like the Three Corners project, the stormwater utility, the Airport, County growth, the septic/sewer system issue, etc. He asked Mr. Dingle which one would be his top as far as being concerned goes.

Mr. Dingle said it would probably be the Three Corners project. He said that Council has an opportunity to develop this project and hopefully it is an area that he can take his children to and they can take their children to. He hopes to see a mixture of Ocean Drive and Downtown incorporated into the Three Corners project.

Mayor Brackett asked how long he has been here.

Mr. Dingle said for 40 months.

Mayor Brackett asked if he has been involved in any local government or sat on any of their Boards.

Mr. Dingle said no, but he belongs to the local Young Republicans Club. He thought that this would be a good opportunity for him because his ambition is to serve in a public office. He wants to impact the community for the better cause.

Mayor Brackett asked if he doesn't get selected, would he be willing to serve on one of their Committees.

Mr. Dingle answered yes.

Mrs. Minuse noticed in Mr. Dingle's resume it referred to 200 lessons. She asked what kind of lessons. Mr. Dingle answered golf.

Mrs. Minuse noticed that Mr. Dingle resided in Long Island, New York. She asked about the similarities between Vero Beach and Montour Marina.

Mr. Dingle did not think there were too many similarities. He said in Montour it is more isolated and there are not a lot of people that move there.

Mrs. Minuse asked Mr. Dingle if he is familiar with how government works in the City. She said that they have a Charter Review Committee that will be reviewing the City Charter and will be looking at recommendations for changes that will have to go to referendum in November. She asked Mr. Dingle if he had any thoughts about their City Charter.

Mr. Dingle said that they need to do what they think is morally right. He said they should go to their constituents to see what they want.

Mr. McCabe thanked Mr. Dingle for wanting to get involved. He asked Mr. Dingle if he had any ideas in bringing more young people to Vero Beach (like college graduates) and having them stay here.

Mr. Dingle agreed that change was necessary. He said that they need to continue working on having more affordable housing to bring young people and retirees to the area. He relishes the opportunity to sit on the City council and serve Vero Beach.

#### **E) John Cotugno**

Mr. Cotugno said that he is relatively new to Vero Beach. He moved here three (3) years ago. He works as an advocate for the Alzheimer's Association. He wanted to be active in his community, which is why he ran for office in 2019 and then ran for City Council again in 2020. When this situation came up he sent in his resume and thinks he has a chance to serve his community. He is currently serving on the Utilities Commission and was selected by the City Council to serve as the alternate member on the Three Corners Steering Committee.

Mrs. Minuse asked Mr. Cotugno how his background played in the issues coming before the Council.

Mr. Cotugno explained that in his last career he worked for a Japanese company, which will be very helpful for some of the issues that they may come up. He wants to make sure that the quality of life is enhanced in this community and that the citizens are well served.

Mrs. Minuse commented that all Charters are different from one municipality to another and they will have a Committee reviewing their Charter soon. She asked him if he had any thoughts about that or any recommendations on changes that he sees need to be changed in the Charter.

Mr. Cotugno explained that the Charter needs to be adapted to the time and place. It needs to provide the framework for the City to operate in the best interest for all of its citizens and how they want their City to be run. He said they may want to include other Parks in the Charter and look at the Oak Trees and how to preserve their environment.

Mr. McCabe asked Mr. Cotugno what he thought the key issue would be for the Council to be addressing over the next year or so.

Mr. Cotugno felt that the first item would be the Three Corners project. He said it would be the Three Corners project, the Wastewater Treatment Plant relocation and the third one is the Marina project. He didn't mention the Lagoon because the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Lagoon are tied together. He said that the Three Corners project is up to the people. He sits on the Steering Committee and has been able to vote on all the issues and he has offered his opinions. He said what will happen is a plan will

be offered to the people for them to either accept or reject. He said the Marina needs to be improved because it is in derelict condition because of past years of neglect.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Cotugno for his views on stormwater utility.

Mr. Cotugno said that you cannot be against the stormwater utility because then you are against the Lagoon. Everyone wants the Lagoon cleaned up so they can start fishing again. However, the timing could not be worse when you look at what is happening with the rest of the world. There is a balance to be reached. Stormwater utility should be eventually organized. You are now getting all the information together and understanding what that information is. The other information will include what the County is going to do. Right now the City is in a situation where they need to collect the information and move forward.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Cotugno about his thoughts on beachside parking.

Mr. Cotugno was disappointed in the survey presented by Kimley-Horn. He asked Kimley-Horn if they queried the largest impact on the beach and how many people use those parking spaces. They answered no. He named the largest organizations (different hotels) that impact the most parking on Ocean Drive. This is a missing piece of information that would be for someone on the Council to find out about. They need that piece of information in order to make a parking decision. He questioned if the merchants willing to contribute to creating those parking spaces as outlined in the study and help to alleviate the problem.

#### **F) Pete Benedict II**

Mr. Benedict said that he grew up in Vero Beach. He attended St. Edward's school and then pursued a career in education. His father was the Headmaster at St. Edward's school and he followed in his footsteps. He came back to Vero Beach about five (5) years ago and got involved with working for a 26-year old landscaping company and purchased it so now he is a local business man. He has spent the last six (6) months coaching lacrosse and soccer at St. Edward's school.

Mayor Brackett asked Mr. Benedict if he has run for City Council before or held any public office. Mr. Benedict said no. Mayor Brackett asked him if he is not picked for this position would he be willing to serve on one of their Commissions. Mr. Benedict answered yes.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Benedict what was his current impression of the Three Corners plan that is being considered and what changes would he make to it.

Mr. Benedict thought that it was one (1) of the most exciting projects in Vero Beach history. He said there are many things about the plan that are exciting. The plan requires entrepreneurial spirit from local businesses, and entrepreneurial spirit provides economic energy to the concept. The project is big enough for open space as well as development. He can see the property from his backyard so he has an investment in how it turns out.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Benedict what he thought about the growth coming to the County and impacting Vero Beach.

Mr. Benedict said that it is a balancing act. The reason that Vero Beach is so successful and popular is not by accident. There was a vision for this community. Decisions made cannot be reversed. At the same point they need to recognize the vibrant community requires businesses that can successfully operate. So far the City has done a great job of that. It is a nice blend of growth with the appropriate amount of density.

Mrs. Minuse asked in this eight (8) month term what he sees as the major issues coming before them and resolution for those issues.

Mr. Benedict said that he would need to get up to speed on the different issues. He knows that there are fiscal responsibilities, as well as legislative matters coming down the pike. The issue with the Airport and Marina repairs and the Lagoon. He will need to get up to speed on those things.

Mrs. Minuse brought up the Charter and said that they are forming a Charter Review Committee and asked him if there were any changes that he could see that need to be made in the Charter and brought before the voters in November.

Mr. Benedict was not real familiar with the Charter. He said that they need to make sure that things are up to date for today's circumstances.

Mr. McCabe asked with all the issues facing the City going forward would he have a key priority area that he feels that they should be focusing on.

Mr. Benedict brought up the Lagoon and said that the health of the Lagoon is the health of Vero Beach. He reiterated that the Lagoon is essential to the health of Vero Beach.

Mayor Brackett thanked everyone who took the time to be interviewed today. He asked Mr. Turner how they should proceed.

Mr. Turner said that there is no requirements under the Charter on how to handle the selection process. It is up to Council. He recommended that they use a ballot and each Councilmember right the name of the person that they would like to have serve on the City Council.

### **3. Public Comment**

Mr. Ken Daige felt that all of the questions were very good. He doesn't know all of the candidates, but they all seem like they want to get involved in the community. He felt that the most informative question asked was the one about the Charter. He found that to be very helpful. He was a part of the Charter Review Commission 15 years ago and it is a very sound document, which makes the City what it is today. He said that one (1) thing that is important is how everyone feels about local neighborhoods. He feels that is the most important issue because that is where people live. That is the life blood of the City. He said that it is a hard choice to fill that spot. He agreed with going with ballots and making their selection that way.

Mrs. Minuse thanked all the candidates that came forward.

### **4. Selection of new City Councilmember**

Each City Councilmember made their selection by ballot (on file in the City Clerk's office), with Mr. McCabe choosing Mr. Dick Winger, Mrs. Minuse choosing Mr. Dick Winger; Vice Mayor Neville choosing Mr. Dick Winger, and Mayor Brackett choosing Mr. John Cotugno.

It was a 3-1 vote to select Mr. Dick Winger for the open position on City Council.

The City Attorney will talk to Mr. Winger and let him know that he has been selected and make sure that he is willing to serve. He will inform Mr. Winger that he is now subject to the Sunshine Law and to the Public Records Act. He will be invited to come into City Hall and be sworn in to office by the City Clerk and that will be done as soon as possible.

Mayor Brackett thanked everyone for the process they have just went through. He wished this would have been a little more transparent. He thinks that Mr. Winger had been notified by a number of Councilmembers right when Mr. Graves resigned and he doesn't like that part of the process. They should have let the candidates come to them.

Mr. Neville said he did not understand what the Mayor had just said.

Mayor Brackett repeated that he was told that a number of Councilmembers were in contact with Mr. Winger asking him to apply. He has the credentials, no doubt. But he wished that it would have been a little bit more transparent and on their own.

Mr. Neville said when you said a number it can't be more than two (2) because he didn't have anything to do with him (Mr. Winger). He asked Mayor Brackett if he was saying that he (Mr. Neville) said something.

Mayor Brackett said he did not give a name. He just thinks it needs to be very transparent. He likes the public interview platform and thinks that they need to continue to work in being transparent in what they do. He said the opinion was out weeks ago and Mr. Winger was the guy.

Mrs. Minuse stated that she would like to be very transparent here and said that she never asked Mr. Winger to run. She swears.

## **5. Adjournment**

Today's meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

/tb

