

**SPECIAL CALL VERO BEACH UTILITIES COMMISSION MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2022 1:30 P.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Chairman Jane Burton; Members: Judy Orcutt, Bill Eggers, Mark Mucher and Member at Large, JT Mooney **ALSO PRESENT:** Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; Cindy Lawson, Finance Director; Matt Mitts, Public Works Director; and City Clerk, Tammy Bursick

Unexcused Absences: Bob Auwaeter and John Sanders

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called today's meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. and the City Clerk performed the roll call.

2. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION:

A) Discussion of Proposed Stormwater Utility Assessment for FY 22-23

Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director, reported that back in December the City Council adopted a Resolution for stormwater utility. She said that this same presentation would be given to the City Council at a Special Call meeting scheduled for next week. She said that this Commission cannot make recommendations on rates, but could make recommendations on other things concerning this report if that is their wishes.

Ms. Sandi Neubarth, Government Services Group, went through the Power Point presentation (attached to the original minutes). She said that this presentation will be given to the City Council at their Special Call meeting next week.

Mr. Mucher recalled hearing Ms. Neubarth say that 70% of the cities use the impervious method when calculating this. He asked how many use the method of ad valorem taxes.

Ms. Neubarth said that she did not know.

Ms. Lawson said that anyone who doesn't have a dedicated source might use it.

Mr. Mucher did not think that it was fair for a single mother who has a small home is having to pay the same amount that someone that has a large parcel is paying.

Ms. Lawson said that is why they came up with four (4) different tiers of what will be assessed.

Mr. Mucher asked how they calculate run off of rain water versus drainage of dirty water.

Ms. Neubarth told him that they don't get that precise when doing the calculations. She expressed that the City does have a capital project mechanism through the one-cent sales tax to fund capital stormwater projects.

Mr. Mucher did not think capital was exclusively flooding versus the Lagoon.

Mr. Matt Mitts, Public Works Director, explained that they stay focused on the operation of maintenance and fixing things that are broken. The stormwater utility will be for stormwater related things and not for things such as a street sweeper.

Mr. Mucher felt that the County should be paying more for the Lagoon cleanup. He said the City pays into the County for their share of the cleanup as well as the City's share.

Mr. Mitts agreed that he would like to see greater leadership from the County on that. He said with this funding they still would be going after grants to help with additional funding and it creates a dedicated fund.

Mr. Mucher had some concerns that when this started it was going to cost the homeowner \$5.00 a month and now it has gone up to \$7.00 a month. He said when Sebastian first initiated a stormwater utility it was for \$2.50 per household and now it is up to \$10.00. He understands inflation, but wonders how far the cost will continue to go up.

Ms. Lawson explained that the monthly fee could be lower, but then they would have to depend on the one-cent sales tax to cover the other projects. She briefly explained what funding is being used from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that the City will be receiving for stormwater related projects. She said there is \$2.1 million still left that Council will determine where it will be spent. She said if the stormwater utility passes then she will bring it back to the City Council every year to approve or not approve.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Herb Whittall asked if religious groups will have to pay the assessment fee. Ms. Neubarth said that yes, everyone pays, including the City. Mr. Whittall continued by saying that he feels they need this stormwater utility. He lived on the Lagoon for over 25 years and it needs to be fixed.

The City Clerk read a prepared statement from Mrs. Rosemary White into the record (attached to the original minutes).

Mrs. Linda Moore asked for an explanation on how businesses will be calculated.

Ms. Neubarth explained that they measure the impervious area on their parcel and divide it by 3,972 square feet to get the ERUS. She said a lot depends on how many impervious parcels that someone has.

Mrs. Jean Catchpole, Indian River Neighborhood Association, stated that she has been advocating for this for five (5) years now. They need to take the money generated to help clean up the Lagoon. Also, one thing that has not been mentioned is that by having this stormwater utility in place that there will be more opportunities to obtain grants.

Mrs. Orcutt asked Mr. Mitts to address the importance of funding in this area. She said that many Legislative grants were given to Brevard County because they planned for some of the projects and they had the matching funds needed to get the grants. She said it was important to have a dedicated funding source.

Mr. Mitts briefly went over a grant that the City is applying for, which is one-hundred percent funded.

Mrs. Orcutt mentioned that they don't have the results of the stormwater study yet so they don't know if they have a big or small problem, but regardless it will take money to address whatever problems that they have.

Mr. Mitts wanted to make it clear that there still won't be enough funding for all the stormwater projects that they currently have.

Mr. Mooney commented that this seems like a minimal amount that is going to be charged. It is important that the City has a project in place and he feels that this is valid and inexpensive.

Mr. Mucher understood that the dedicated funding source helps get grants, but when putting his Taxpayer's Association hat on, he had some problems with the calculations (multiplier).

Mr. Mitts explained in the budget there are a lot of items listed and they are mostly things that need to be fixed, which he said is a large burden to carry.

Mr. Mucher commented that when they free up some money from one place they will find another place to spend it.

Ms. Lawson commented that as far as the one-cent sales tax goes there are a lot of unfunded projects listed, which means there are many unmet needs in the one-cent sales tax.

Mr. Whittall added that more projects will need to be done if they want to clean up the runoff in the Lagoon.

Mr. Mike Johannsen asked if this money is just for one (1) year.

Ms. Lawson said that the money will be carried forward and adopted every year by City Council.

Mr. Johannsen was happy to hear that any unfunded money will be carried over. He said the Lagoon is not getting any better and they should all pitch in.

Mrs. Orcutt made a motion that they are recommending to the City Council to move forward in adopting the stormwater fee/utility. Mr. Mooney seconded the motion.

Mrs. Burton mentioned that in the future the MCL levels are going to drop even further and they will be in trouble because they won't be meeting their water quality in 2025. She said none of them like having to pay for cleaning up things, but if they don't move forward today they could be in trouble in the future.

The motion passed 4-1 with Mr. Mucher voting no.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

/tb