PRESENT: Mayor Tony Young; Vice Mayor Laura Moss; Councilmember Robbie Brackett; Councilmember Joe Graves and Councilmember Rey Neville (present via telephone) Also Present: Monte Falls, City Manager; John Turner, City Attorney and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

A) Roll Call

The City Clerk performed the roll call.

B) Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Vice Mayor Moss led the audience and the City Council in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Mayor Young added to today’s agenda, an Update on Covid-19 to be heard as item #6).

2. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

*Please Note: These items are not being discussed as they appear on this agenda.

A. Complete the Study for the Stormwater Utility

Mr. Graves said that he would like the City Council to give their authority to get the Stormwater Utility study completed. He said when you read what has been done and especially where we are in the current environment with tax revenues that are going to be decreased, it is extremely important that we don’t overlook our infrastructure needs and one (1) of our major infrastructure needs is stormwater. He said we have needs and we have a five year plan of things that need to be completed and when we face a budget like we are going to be facing things like this tend to be pushed aside. To him, taking care of their infrastructure should be priority one (1), especially stormwater when talking about issues, such as the Lagoon. He said that he wanted the City Council to vote on completing the Stormwater Study. He noted that it would not implement a utility, but it would get the study completed.

Mayor Young said the City Council has been provided with a great deal of input in regards to the stormwater utility and they are on record.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, said this is a very important issue. A few meetings ago staff promised the City Council a formal presentation with more detail. He reported that last week staff met with the consultants who prepared the report and are awaiting proposals to complete that work. He said staff will get that proposal and bring it back before the City Council. He said at the budget hearings they can discuss the timeline as to what steps they will have to hit, if the City Council chooses to have the kickoff in the next fiscal year, which would be October 1, 2021. He said it would take about a year to implement once the study is done. He said they will have the numbers (cost) for completing the study at the budget hearings.
Mr. Dick Winger felt they would all like to see this move forward. He said in the long run, it isn’t any different than moving the Water and Sewer Plant. He thinks the City Council is doing a good thing in making a policy statement that if it is possible to do it they will do it. He said all they were asking for is to move forward eventually with a policy statement. When it gets imposed or when the revenue gets collected, that is for a later date. He said they have to look at the fact that of the 410 cities in Florida, 167 of them have a stormwater utility. Virtually every community from Jupiter to Melbourne has one, except Vero Beach, Indian River Shores, and the County. He said the City will not be able to make the mandates from the State, as far as runoff goes without it. Also, the current infrastructure is failing and the Lagoon needs help. He said if they have a stormwater utility they would then be able to receive matching grants. Also, the one-cent sales tax would then be available for other infrastructures in the City. He thinks it should be sunnetted for about five years. He thinks the next step is to finish the study and then begin looking at a policy statement. He said they need to be flexible, but just like the Water and Sewer Plant, it needs to be fixed.

Mrs. Judy Orcutt said that she is here representing the Clean Water Coalition. She urged the City Council to move forward with the study. She feels that it is important that the City Council understands why they need to do this. She referred to the 2013, Basin Management Action Plan, that was previously sent to the City Council (on file in the City Clerk’s office). She reported that there has been a little update to the Plan since then because they were not under mandate to reduce nutrients. But, since that time seagrass has continued to decline so now they are redoing the Basin Management Action Plan, which is supposed to be done every five (5) years. This time around all entities within Indian River County will be obligated to do projects to reduce nutrients. The problem in Indian River County is non-point pollution. We don’t have any industry that is dumping into the water so everything is coming from what we, as individuals, are doing, such as growing food, growing grass, driving cars, flushing toilets into septic systems, etc., and all of that waste gets taken through the stormwater drainage system into the Lagoon. However, very little of it within the City of Vero Beach is treated to remove those nutrients. She explained that under the Federal Clean Water Act when a body of water is declared impaired, they delegate the authority to the State of Florida to fix it, which the department that is in charge of that is the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). She reported that the FDEP is working with the City’s Engineering Department in coming up with an allocation of what percentage of all the garbage going into the Lagoon belongs to the City of Vero Beach and then the City of Vero Beach has to have a plan on how they are going to remove it. She reported that on a yearly basis the City of Vero Beach will be obligated to report the projects they are doing and what nutrients they are removing. On a five (5) year plan, the FDEP looks at the entire picture to decide if the City is making progress. She said this is a complicated process. She said funding assistance is important, but before they could get a matching grant they have to have the engineering work, the planning, the permitting, etc., completed. She said the FDEP has stated that they expect to have the final allocations assigned by the end of the year. She noted that the FDEP does have the authority to fine entities in violation so there is a stick. The “carrot” is the grants and the “stick” is the fines. She referred to an article, State Increases Sewage Fine to Ft. Lauderdale to $2.1 million – the Largest Penalty in History (on file in the City Clerk’s office). She reported that the FDEP slapped the City of Ft. Lauderdale with a $1.8 million fine. She said it is going to get costly if we don’t plan ahead and get ready.

Ms. Jean Catchpole, of the Indian River Neighborhood Association, thanked Councilmember Graves for bringing this budget item forward so they can get an early start in providing the funds for the completion of the study. She said the two (2) most important pages of the study is the stormwater utility project page, which shows what has been done to date and what remains to be done and the other page itemizes what remains to be done, which gives the cost of about $39,000 to complete the study. She said there is no question that the City is going to need the funds of a stormwater utility to take care of the stormwater
problem. She said they really need to take this first step and complete the study. They will have ample time to debate the issue after they peruse the study. She said this is a very important first step and urged the City Council to take it.

Mr. Falls reported that the backbone of the drainage system that the City discharges into is the Indian River Farms Water Control District, which consists of a series of canals that were built back in the 1920’s and 1930’s. He said the City only represents about 12% of that total drainage system. He said it is an important step for the City, but the ultimate quality of the Lagoon is going to really depend on everyone doing their fair share.

Mr. Steve Boyle said protecting the Lagoon is very important for all of them. He said one (1) thing that he has not heard mentioned is that the quality of the Indian River Lagoon affects everyone’s property values whether they live in the City or in the County. He felt this was a win/win situation by being able to improve the quality of the Indian River Lagoon.

Vice Mayor Moss reminded the community that you can start today. She said don’t forget, native plants, Florida friendly plants, rain gardens, etc. She said they are sitting here today and are surrounded by them. She thanked the City Manager for implementing it and thanked the City Council for agreeing to it. She said you can change the world. Start with your front yard or your backyard. She said to get going today and not to wait for government; do it.

B. Panhandling Ordinance

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, provided to Council backup material regarding this matter (attached to the original minutes). He said they have discussed the case of Reed vs Gilbert, which has changed the entire landscape of the First Amendment application, which is now law. In his memorandum he tried to give Council a general outline of what the law is today, what issues they have, and how can they address this so that the residents, business owners, and visitors are protected. He said safety is the primary issue. Safety on the roadways and safety for the pedestrians is the issue, as well as the impact on local businesses. He then gave a Power Point presentation (attached to the original minutes). He said first of all the issues to be addressed are panhandling on sidewalks and center medians. They are also addressing aggressive panhandling, which will have a specific application and definition. Another issue is what are the residual impacts of panhandling on residents and businesses. He said the there are two (2) sections that address this in the City’s current Ordinances; Section 62-84 and Section 74.173. Section 74.173 is what was enacted in 2016 that had more prohibitions on where and how a person can solicit contributions and the locations. He said the Ordinance has general application, but there are some issues with it. The current law derives from Reed vs Town of Gilbert where the Supreme Court addressed what is content based or non-content based on signs and expressions. It has been determined that panhandling or solicitation of funds from the public right-of-way is generally covered by the First Amendment. So, if you are going to regulate it you have to have an overriding concern or basis for a government to regulate it and it has to be regulated in such a way that has the least method of interfering with the First Amendment. What they are facing is, can they regulate strictly sidewalk use for people holding signs requesting money and can they regulate those in the roadway and center medians. He said most ordinances in other jurisdictions that prohibit that action are held unconstitutional because of the violation of the Reed vs Town of Gilbert case. He reported that in Florida, there have been two (2) cases sited more often than not, which were in Tampa and Miami. In both cases, the Courts held that the Ordinance banning
solicitation of donations or payments in certain parts of Town were unconstitutional in that it was a violation of the First Amendment. In Tampa, they were banning panhandling in Ybor City and Downtown Tampa. The Plaintiffs in the Court noted that the Ordinance was a content based regulation of speech that could not withstand the strict scrutiny standard that is used for a First Amendment examination because soliciting money is protected by the First Amendment. He said it also relates to where the action is taking place because public forums include sidewalks, public parks, public streets, etc., so you combine the First Amendment with the public forum issue and you have to have overriding public concerns to regulate it. He said that is what they are facing in trying to regulate panhandling and solicitation of funds. He said there is some encouraging news that came out of a case in the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, which did recognize regulating solicitation of funds in the roadways and it determined that restrictions on those activities can be imposed if there are safety factors that are overriding. The good news is that those types of regulations can and should be enforced. It is the regulations on the sidewalk areas that have to be addressed. He said that he is not stating that nothing can be done or drafted, but if they are going to address it they have to have the proper evidence that such activity is a public safety issue and by that, he would suggest that they bring in the Police Department, the Sanitation Department, and medical experts. He said if the basis for their control is a safety and health matter, which a lot of times people who are engaged in this activity will use the facilities that are closest to them, which may not be public restrooms and that they are causing a serious health problem in some of the local businesses. He said these are the issues that they can address and can hopefully correct with an Ordinance that is enforceable in that if it is subject to attack they can defend it. He reported that in St. Augustine, the evidence presented to their City Council was impressive and it is going to allow them to properly defend an Ordinance that will be upheld in Court. He said this is not something they can do in one (1) meeting and they are going to have to have some Legislative Hearings on it in which we need to bring in the proper authorities to support the Ordinance. That is the kind of direction that he would like from the City Council if they want staff to investigate this further is to draft a plan on how to address the problem and allow him to present it to Council in a white paper form. As it is now, he would suggest that they look into this so if they need to they can change the Ordinance they currently have.

Mr. Brackett said that he thinks they need to proceed with this and draft something that is tighter. He felt they had an issue on State Road 60, both east and westbound, and on US1 with people walking into traffic. They also have the same issue on US1 and 17th Street near Walgreens. He said it seems that they have more of it in the City limits and they need to tighten this up because it is a safety issue.

Mr. Graves agreed. He asked Chief Currey, as far as US1 and the State Road 60 areas where they have had a lot of panhandling, has that created safety risks.

Mr. David Currey, Police Chief, answered yes. He said they have been dealing with this for many years and as part of their ongoing efforts they passed an Ordinance in 2016, in that there were individuals at the drive-thru exit of McDonalds and they attacked it from a public safety standpoint. He reported that they also placed signs throughout the City to encourage motorists (not to stop and donate). He said that every business along the US1 corridor and many throughout the City have trespass affidavits. He said they do make several arrests because they are trespassing. He said they have not really had a median issue. The issue has been on the sidewalk corners. He said another idea is to get with Go-Line to see if they can redirect some of their stops because one (1) of the problems at 17th Street and US1 is the Go-Line bus stop. He said this is ongoing and the main problem is on the sidewalk corners.
Mayor Young asked are the mental health professionals aware of the concerns for the safety of these people. He said that he could probably name the individuals who are there because many of them are repeats and have familiar faces.

Chief Currey said there is an individual who has been arrested about 50 times in the County and in the City, which a lot of it had to do with trespassing, disorderly intoxication, etc. He said many times the individuals they are dealing with are not able to get into these facilities for help because either they don’t want help or because they are not sober.

Mayor Young said the other concern he has is Pocahontas Park. He said they have individuals who are sleeping by the Heritage Center and using the shrubbery as urinals. In the past they have had complaints from parents that they don’t want to take their children to the playground because of illicit behavior.

Chief Currey said Pocahontas Park and the Heritage Center is part of their ongoing efforts. For many years they have been doing foot patrol there. He said there have been ongoing things being done at this area, such as checking the restrooms, taking out electricity, etc.

Vice Mayor Moss told Chief Currey that the City Council appreciates everything you do and this is a very serious issue. She said someone was stabbed to death in the vicinity of McDonalds and that was several years ago. So, they really need to support you and address this in whatever way they can. She just wants to be sure that this is enforceable so she wants to be sure you (Chief Currey) is involved every step of the way; that these are just not words, but something he can actually put into practice, but they want to support him 100%. It’s dangerous. Other than Covid, it is probably our most serious public safety issue and it’s ongoing and by the way, it is her understanding that homelessness can facilitate the spread of the virus as well, so it’s also a health issue from that access. She said it is very unfortunate and they all see it and understand it at a basic level and that is that not everyone can be helped. She knows the Veterans Council reach out to many different people and help all the Veterans and as they put it, the only ones that aren’t helped won’t be helped. They just have problems where they fall through the cracks and don’t meet the requirements of these organizations that are out there and who are doing a wonderful job helping many people.

Mr. Graves said that he called Chief Currey to the dais because he wanted the public to understand the issues the City faces and that the Police Department faces. He said based on what Chief Currey just said, he feels there is a compelling reason to move forward with hearings on this Ordinance and the various disciplines outlined so they can construct an Ordinance that would be defensible.

Vice Mayor Moss agreed. She thinks they need to do everything they can.

Mr. Turner said that the Police Department and his staff will be an intrical part in this going forward.

C. Tourist Tax

Mr. Turner stated that the City contributes a large sum of money under the Tourist Tax and are they receiving their fair return on it, which is an investment of taxpayer’s money. The Tourist Development Tax (TDT) is governed by Florida Statutes and authorized by the counties to levy tourist development tax. The funds that are collected are limited to certain expenditures. Some of the Statutes limit the funds for authorized purposes only. Sections 125.0104(5)(a) and (2) limit use of TDT funds for authorized purposes “only” and specifically prohibits the use of these funds for “a purpose not expressly authorized” by the
TDT Statute. He said if there are payments made that are not contained in the list then those payments may be withheld. Authorized uses of TDT funds permitted are to acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or promote one or more: 1) publicly owned and operated convention centers, sports stadiums, sports arenas, coliseums, or auditoriums within the boundaries of the County or Sub-County special taxing district in which the tax is levied; 2) auditoriums that are publicly owned but are operated by organizations that are exempt from federal taxation pursuant to 26 U.S.C. s. 501(c)(3) and open to the public, within the boundaries of the County or Sub-County special taxing district in which the tax is levied; 3) aquariums or museums that are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public, within the boundaries of the County or Sub-County special taxing district in which the tax is levied; and 4) to promote zoological parks that are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public. The TDC funds can also be used to promote and advertise tourism, fund convention bureaus, tourist bureaus, tourist information centers, and news bureaus as County agencies or by contract with the Chamber of Commerce or similar associations in the County. The TDC funds can be used to finance beach park facilities, or beach, channel, estuary, or lagoon improvement, maintenance, re-nourishment, restoration, and erosion control, including construction of beach groins and shoreline protection, enhancement, cleanup or restoration of inland lakes and rivers to which there is public access as those uses relate to the physical preservation of the beach, shoreline, channel, estuary, lagoon, or inland lake or river.

Mr. Turner explained the Board of County Commission adopts a plan for tourist development, which must be approved by Ordinance by a majority vote plus one. The Tourist Development Council makes recommendations to the Board of County Commission for the effective operation of the special projects or for uses of the TDT and shall receive at least quarterly expenditure reports from the County. Expenditures the Council believes to be unauthorized shall be reported to the County and State Department of Revenue. Currently the TDT funds are applied as follows: one and one-half cents on beach re-nourishment/beach projects; one cent for the former Dodgertown facility and to retire bonds on the project and one and one-half cents for promotion/advertisement for tourism in the County. Indian River County imposed the TDT, established the Tourist Development Council, and authorized use of tax revenue by Ordinance #87-11. It also established two (2) taxing districts. District One encompasses the City of Vero Beach and District Two is the remainder of Indian River County. He is trying to follow what has occurred over the last years and it is complicated and convoluted. When requests were made to the Tourist Development Council, he was not sure that any of them were recognized or approved. He said it seems like they are up against a brick wall. He said the Board of County Commission claims that everything they are doing is according to the Statute, however from his point of view their transparency is lacking. The Attorney General issues opinions on questions and regarding the beach improvements there are a couple of important ones, which does carry a great deal of weight when the Courts are asked to weigh in. The provision that is important to the City is the provision that “financing beach park facilities” was changed by the Legislature in 1996, and since that time the Attorney General has issued a few opinions and not directly answered the questions of lifeguard stands or funding. But, he would feel that lifeguard stands should be included in beach park facilities. It is arguable that lifeguard towers/stands and even lifeguard salaries are “beach park facilities” since this would advance and promote tourism. He summarized how such a funding request could and should proceed: “Thus, the construction of publicly owned facilities financed by the proceeds from a tourist development tax must be primarily related to the advancement and promotion of tourism. The determination of whether a particular facility or project is
Mr. Turner commented that he did receive information from the County and he appreciates that. He has reviewed some of it and it is very involved. He did not receive the information until late Friday afternoon and the information has to do with the Ordinances that were adopted. He asked Council how they want him to proceed in investigating further and if an investigation is in order, how do they want to do it. He could recommend that his office does it, but realizing that it could take some time considering the other issues that his office is working on he would also suggest that perhaps he could identify an expert that they could consult with who is an expert in tourist development tax and have them look at what has occurred and make some recommendations on how he/she thinks they should proceed in trying to get what they feel is a fair return on the larger investments that taxpayers have made. He does not think, from his client’s point of view, that the Board of County Commission is cooperating the way they should and that the requests are not being taken seriously. He said it is not a simple issue and it is not clear.

Mr. Brackett commented that this has been going on for years. He said that when he ran for office one (1) of the things that he wanted to accomplish was having a better relationship with the County. He has been working on it and he is not there yet. They have to learn to work together as a Team. He said that the City of Vero Beach is in Indian River County. He said a lot of the dollars are generated here in the City of Vero Beach and the things that they use the money for benefit all County residents. He only knows of one (1) issue that was taken to the County since he has been on Council and it was done by an individual Councilmember. There has not been a concerted effort where they can all go over their priority list and meet with their fellow County Commissioners individually and work with their staff in a more progressive manner. He would like Mr. Turner to proceed in trying to find out in more detail what their options are. They need to come up with a plan to talk to the County Commission about.

Mr. Graves agreed with the comments made by Mr. Brackett. He said that when he ran for City Council his platform was to have greater cooperation with the County also. He has met with some of the County Commissioners on other issues and feels that this warrants further investigation. His original question was what their remedy was. So they need to continue to investigate to determine how they can proceed as a City to gather additional dollars from the tourist tax. He said the main question is whether they do it with Mr. Turner or hire an outside expert. He would rather have Mr. Turner do it and not spend money on an outside expert.

Mr. Turner said that he would be glad to do it. He said that it will take a little time.

Vice Mayor Moss stated that she knew one (1) real obvious way to improve the City’s relationship with the County Commission and you are looking at her. She was sorry to say that this is the root of the problem and she was not referring to the entire County Commission because it changes over the years and opinions change with different issues. This has been a source of contention. She said for the community there is one (1) really basic and easy to understand issue. How did they get to where they are today. There was a referendum passed on March 10, 1997, and what was approved was, “shall there be a Tourist Development Tax of 2% levied pursuant to Section 125.0104 Florida Statutes.” About 2/3rds of the people that voted, voted in favor of it and 1/3rd were against it. She said this entire issue should be based on that Statute. That is what people voted on and that is the will of the people. She said what has happened since then is Ordinances have been passed. There are some legal questions and they do have two (2)
attorneys here. That is a good starting point. She said Ordinances are not personal so she thinks they would be on pretty solid ground with that. She would hope that the County would come to the City Council. It is time. They have been talking about this lifeguard stand for so long. She referred to the Vero Beach Lifeguard Monthly Beach Report and said that the total Park attendance for May was 91,943 visitors. She thanked the Lifeguard Association for everything that they do. The visitors that came and visited the beach in May were way beyond the residents of the City. She said that safety is first and they need to make sure that everyone is safe. She said the lifeguard station is something that they can remedy. The money is there. It is just a matter of doing it. She commended Mr. Vincent Valentino, Mr. Shaun Debolt and Mr. Zac Weinstein. On June 16, 2020, a 77 year old man collapsed coming out of the water and these lifeguards were there to give him CPR and saved his life. They need to support a lifeguard stand and support the Vero Beach Lifeguard Association. The bottom line is that it is the City’s money to be used for the lifeguard stand and it benefits everyone. She said it doesn’t have to be “we” and “they,” which is wrong. They need to work on better relationships.

Mr. Neville did not have anything to add.

Mayor Young commented that the consensus that he has heard so far is working with the County is going to be a priority and they would like to explore further the option for the tourist tax money.

Mayor Young stated that they are one (1) community and after having one (1) interaction regarding the tourist tax dollars, he was denied up front and assured that the County would support the City, which they did through other manners. But, what concerns him is if they have a agreed upon position that they entered into that was modified at a later point and he wants to understand how that process took place. He said looking at the allocations of where this money is going it shows 70% is going between Sebastian and Indian River Chamber of Commerce. He said understanding the rationale behind that would be helpful. Then if you look at the organizations being funded, what is the basis which the Commission makes the decision to provide those funds. The Chamber of Commerce is allocated over 50% of the funds. He said looking at how the money is expended and the basis for it is one thing that he would like to know. The other point that he wanted to make was that 22% funding goes to the Treasure Coast Sports Commission and he doesn’t know if the return on investment is any benefit to the community. He noted that last year $75,000 was spent on a tourism study and this coming year there is zero money for that. He said as the provider for the bulk of the tourist tax it would be helpful to better understand the rationale. The City Attorney has a consensus to continue working on this.

D. Body Cams

Chief Currey stated that they always believe in transparency in everything that they do in the Police Department. He said in 2014 and 2015, body cams were a hot topic as they are now. He said that many agencies went to body cams and then pulled them back as they quieted down the need for them. It is based on the individual City or the area of concern. With the recent events, body cams once again are a hot topic. The Florida Police Chief’s Association did a quick survey and 135 municipalities responded (on file in the City Clerk’s office). The question was, “do you have a body camera program and if you do not are you planning to implement one”. Out of the responses, 70 said that they had a program and 65 said that they did not. Of those 65 municipalities that did not there were about 35 municipalities looking at implementing a body camera program. He does not oppose body cameras and never has. He said that in this community there are very few complaints and he feels that the Police Department deals with everyone justly and fairly. There may be some communities around the country that need body cameras
more than Vero Beach does based on the problems and issues that they have. They currently have in-car systems that have cameras and that generally runs about $5,000 a car and they have plans to upgrade that system. He said with the body cameras themselves there is a lot more than just putting them on your body. There is storage to the cloud, records retention, and general policy in using the body cameras. He emphasized that there is a lot involved and he does not impose doing that. The cost for the body cameras will be $50,000 and up. He just wanted Council to be aware of that. He does understand the budget and that they are not the only Department in the City. He said that the Police Department has different projects this year that they would like to see funded. He said being honest, he would love to have the body cameras tomorrow, but understands the cost involved.

Mr. Graves asked how many internal complaints has the City of Vero Beach received.

Mr. Matt Monaco, Captain of the Police Department, said last year there were two (2) or three (3) complaints. He said on average there is about one (1) complaint a year.

Mr. Graves asked about use of force complaints.

Mr. Monaco said that he did not remember.

Chief Currey said there is a report that is on their website that includes the number and most of the use of force that they use is a level 2. He said that they rarely have to use deadly force.

Mr. Graves asked about when their officers have complaints, how do they get them on camera. He understands that a traffic stop would be easy to get on camera, but questioned what about like a domestic complaint or something of that nature. He asked what is the policy in regards to the interaction with that civilian in relationship to the camera in the car.

Chief Currey explained that the way they would like it even with their dash cameras is to conduct as much as they can in front of the car or a place where the dash cameras will pick up the incident. Depending on the nature or scene sometimes they are not able to get it on camera, but they try to do their best to utilize the dash cameras.

Mr. Graves asked if it is their policy to do it that way.

Chief Currey did not know if it was outlined in their policy, but they can look at the policy and it can be adjusted.

Mr. Graves asked how many domestic calls they receive in a year.

Chief Currey said that he could provide that number. He said it is a decent number. It is an issue that is on-going. With the pandemic they really did not see an increase in calls, but it is something that they deal with on a daily basis.

Mr. Graves asked Chief Currey would he agree that outside of traffic stops that domestic cases would be one of the most useful tools for the body cameras. Chief Currey answered yes. He said other things where the cameras would be useful for is aggravated assaults, people with weapons, fire arms, shots fired, etc. With these cameras on your body these are things that could pick up footage as things transpire.

Mr. Graves asked if there were times that Chief Currey would have liked to have had a body camera to capture images of a perpetrator.
Chief Currey answered yes and the times would be because he knows what his Police Officers did and they wish that they had it on camera.

Mr. Graves asked Chief Currey if body cameras are something that they want or don’t want.

Chief Currey stated by having body cameras it would continue their efforts in being transparent and it would show the community how they operate. They certainly are a proponent, but they do understand the cost.

Mr. Graves felt that it could be an important tool. He said that police get involved in so many other things than making traffic stops. It is good to let the public know what their police are doing for their citizens. He knows that the City police officers do so many great things. His position is if the Police Department wants body cameras then he would be for it and if they don’t then he agrees that they really don’t have a great problem in this community, but as far as transparency this could be a useful tool.

Chief Currey commented that he thinks that it is inevitable that it is a tool for law enforcement.

Mr. Graves stated in his view it protects the officer and also provides additional evidence for perpetrators or something like that.

Mr. Currey agreed and it would keep the police officers on their “toes” as far as knowing that everything is on camera.

Mr. Brackett agreed luckily they are not in a community where these body cameras are immediately needed, but his hat is off to the Police Chief and the way that he communicates problems and the way that he handles situations. It comes from the top down. He asked on this survey how many people did not respond.

Chief Currey commented that he knows that their membership is approaching 1,000 members, but as far as agencies who did not respond he does not have that number. He said that it was a good response for a survey that went out for one (1) day and they were asked to respond by the next day.

Mr. Brackett asked if there were grants available for body cameras.

Chief Currey said that there are. He said this is something that they could purchase over a number of years, such as the way they recently did with new radios. It was a three (3) year program to purchase all of the needed radios.

Mr. Brackett agreed that body cameras were something that they needed to continue to look at and talk about at budget time this year.

Mr. Graves asked if this was something that they could phase in.

Chief Currey said they were looking at phasing it in over a five (5) year time frame.

Captain Monaco stated that he has been in charge of the IA Division for quite a number of years and he cannot remember in the last five (5) to 10 years that they have had more than one (1) case where excessive use of force was used. He said there are a lot of factors to consider when implementing a body camera program. The range of prices scales from $52,000 annually up to $72,000 annually and that is to host a body warrant program for each individual officer that would be uploaded to the cloud. They do have the option of hosting it on their servers internally, but they would have to increase their capacity of

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their servers and that is something that would have to be done over a three (3) year rotating basis. This is compounded because they also have the storage from the in-car camera systems. It is really something that they need to work with their IT Department on to come up with the best plan of action moving forward. He said there are a few different options that they can look at.

Mr. Graves asked if the in-car cameras are in the cloud.

Captain Monaco said no. He said that they are looking at a new manufacturer because their current in-car camera system is not keeping up with the times and the quality of the video is poor. They do have a vendor in mind that they are moving forward with and that vendor does have the option of uploading to the cloud. He said whichever in-car system that they do decide to go with it would be imperative to also use them with the body cameras. He said the two (2) would pair together. They don’t want to have two (2) independent systems. The ideal situation would be to have body cameras link up to the cameras in the new cars that they will be purchasing in the next budget cycle. He commented that when he first started looking into this matter in 2013, that not all the officers were in favor of it. But, things have changed and officers now realize that most citizens have a cell phone with them and the cell phone has a camera and they can record the incident, which a police officer doesn’t have the ability to do. A body camera would be able to capture an incident occurring from start to finish. He said not only does it show transparency, but it would also protect the officer from unfunded allocations.

Vice Mayor Moss commented that if the body cameras are something that will help the Police Department in their job then City Council will support them.

Mayor Young stated that he was looking at this from another perspective. He looks at this as to what the cost will be and hiring another officer as opposed to the cost of having cameras or provide other training to the department as opposed to having body cameras. He said as they look at their organization, they look at personnel, they look at equipment and training, and there is a tradeoff with the dollars that are spent. He said if there is a need then that needs to be addressed. But, if it is transparency in looking at the Department and how the Department is run then he feels very confident in the transparency of their Police Department. He is 100% in favor of the Police Department, however there are other City Departments that are vital elements within the City. He knows as they look at the budget they have been very generous and they will continue to be. He knows that the Police Department will bring them the right answers at budget time and Council will support it because that is what they do. He did not want it to be instigated without something that is a reflection of Vero Beach.

Vice Mayor Moss heard from the Police Chief and Captain this morning that this was the cost of doing business. She said that they needed to have body cameras in order to conduct their day to day business.

Captain Monaco agreed. He said before it was in-car camera systems in which every agency didn’t have those cameras. Now, just about all police departments have them and he now sees the same situation with body cameras. He felt that the majority of agencies will start providing them.

Mayor Young referred to the survey and announced how many of the difference agencies throughout the State are looking at purchasing body cameras.

Mr. Graves suggested going into the budget workshops and providing Council with a cost associated with having these body cameras and phasing them in.
Vice Mayor Moss added that by facing in the project they will be able to see if it is really helpful.

At this time, Council took a five minute break and the meeting reconvened at 11:38 a.m.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

1) An Ordinance of the City of Vero Beach, Florida, amending Chapter 38, Article 1 (Signs) of the Land Development Regulations to Revise or Add Sign Definitions, Revise the List of Prohibited Signs, Revise the List of Signs exempt from the Sign Regulations, Revise the list of Signs not requiring permits, Revise the General Sign Regulations, add standards for Specific Sign Types, Revise Sign Requirements for Residential and Non-Residential Zoning Districts, Revise Temporary Sign Standards, and Requirements for Removal of Abandoned Signs, Revise Standards for non-conforming Signs, add a Substitution Clause, and Revise Application Review Process; Providing for Codification; Providing for Conflict and Severability; and Providing for an Effective Date. – Requested by the Planning and Development Director

The City Clerk read the Ordinance by title only.

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, reported that this is a continuation of the public hearing held on June 16, 2020, for the adoption of some amendments to the existing Sign Ordinance. At that meeting, the City Council had two (2) requests. The first was to add text to the nonconforming signs as it relates to documenting the grandfathering status, which that language has been added. He noted that the changes made are included in their backup information and are listed in red under Section 38.16. The second was regarding the flag regulations, which has been revised to accommodate some of the taller flagpoles that are currently not allowed in the City. He noted that the intent of this Ordinance is really to deal with “content based” regulations, which was anywhere in the Code where there is “content based” regulations they are pulling those out or adding language so that they are in compliance with Reed vs Gilbert. He said that they just want to make sure as they are implementing the flag ordinances that are already in the Code, that they are content neutral as required by the United States Supreme Court. He reported that the City adopted the first Sign Ordinance in 1953 and 1977 was the first time the City regulated flag ordinances that was essentially related to commercial properties. In 2012, which is the language currently in the Code, there is a maximum height of 25-feet, which applies to all zoning districts. He said that he went back and looked at these regulations and the City Surveyors went out and got estimates on some of the existing flagpoles in the City and it looks like some flagpoles are 31-feet. What he is proposing to do is increase the height to 35-feet in non-residential districts, which is the same height as the City’s height limits for buildings in those districts. In the P-2 Zoning District, because there are some flagpoles that are taller than 35-feet, such as on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, to make sure that becomes a conforming flag there is specific language added to make it 80-feet in height with a larger flag. He received a request yesterday for a way for someone who has an existing flagpole that exceeds these limits and it was damaged by a storm that they could rebuild it. He reported that additional language was added to page 33, item (f) (2) of the proposed Ordinance, which was handed out to the City Council (on file in the City Clerk’s office). He noted that Strunk Funeral Home has a flagpole that was approved for up to 60-feet in 1980, as part of their site plan, which was allowed at that time. In this instance if it was to get damaged they would be able to rebuild it per the approved site plan. Also for Councils’ consideration, there are three (3) alternatives to flags. They could make the entire flag issue to be exempt
from the Sign Code, they could make no changes and keep it at 25-feet, or what he is proposing in the proposed Ordinance.

Vice Mayor Moss asked are they to understand then that in the final analysis of what is proposed that it does not in any way change the existing flagpoles.

Mr. Jeffries said that is correct. The flagpoles that were legally constructed can remain.

Vice Mayor Moss said for the community, because she knows there was some confusion, especially with regard to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, that something was going to be changed, but it is not going to be changed.

Mr. Jeffries explained that what he is proposing is making that conforming.

Mr. Brackett asked if they could just exempt the United States flags and the State of Florida flags.

Mr. Jeffries said the issue with that is that it gets into “content based.”

Mr. Brackett said but they can eliminate all flags from the Sign Code.

Mr. Jeffries explained what he is suggesting is that they could state that flags are exempt from the Code, but that removes all restrictions, such as spacing, the number of flagpoles, etc. He said the real issue is exempting the United States flag, but if they eliminated just the United States flag they would be moving into more of a content based regulation.

Mr. Brackett thought the problem the Council had at their last meeting when discussing this was that apparently they have flags of all different heights. He thought that the problem the Council as a whole had with this Ordinance was that there are a lot of inconsistencies and how do they make sure they are all taken care of so that they are now in violation.

Mr. Jeffries said that he has to make assumptions that all the flagpoles were put in place conforming to the regulations at the time they were installed.

Mr. Brackett said that was the question the Council had and they asked staff to go back and verify when they were put in place and just didn’t put in a general grandfathering clause because they wanted staff to verify that they were in conforming at the time.

Mr. Jeffries explained that it would take a lot of staff time to go to every property with a flag. He said that he did go back into the files of the more notable areas to find when they were put in place. He said that he is providing the history, which is that the first Sign Ordinance to deal with flags occurred in 1977, and it only dealt with flags used for advertising for commercial establishments. Then the current provision occurred in 2012, and it made it broader to all zoning districts. It provided regulations for residential districts and nonresidential districts. He said because staff went and identified some of the key nonresidential zoning district properties that have flagpoles at a height of 30-feet he is proposing a height of 35-feet, which would put them in nonconforming.

Mr. Brackett asked is it fair to say that if they adopt this Ordinance that every flag they have now will be legal and if they get damaged they can be replaced.
Mr. Jeffries answered yes.

Mayor Young said the other part of this was the concern about the limitations on the size of the flagpole and the dimensions of the flags, which he felt that they were where they should be with the third alternative. He said the only concern is if someone has a flagpole on a structure.

Mr. Jeffries said in 1977, flagpoles were allowed on top of commercial buildings so that would be authorized. If it is there and existing then it could be reconstructed if damaged.

Mr. Graves said that he still does not see in this proposed language where it states what they are trying to figure out. He said if they are having trouble figuring out what this means then a Court or someone else interpreting this down the road is going to have trouble figuring it out. He would think they could clearly state in the Ordinance that existing flagpoles are exempt or grandfathered in.

Mr. Jeffries explained that is what item (f) (2) is for, which states in part, “except for ground flagpoles, which may be restored to the height previously authorized by the City.”

Mr. Graves said it doesn’t clearly state it in his view.

Mr. Falls suggested that they change it to state, “restored to the height previously installed” and take out “authorized by the City.”

Mr. Graves said they are creating conflict rights from the beginning. He referred to page 32, Section 38.16, item (a), which states in part, “Nonconforming signs shall be subject to the standards in this section…” He said there is an inconsistency in reading the later provisions that existing flagpoles that were allowed by the City. He felt there should be clearer language that existing flagpoles that were approved by the City are not subject to this.

Mr. Brackett said it also states under item (f) (2) that if it is damaged greater than 50% that it must now conform.

Mr. Jeffries noted that at the end of that item it states “except…”

Mr. Brackett said it states “except for ground flagpoles…”

Mr. Jeffries said they can delete the word “ground” so then it would be for all flagpoles.

Mr. Graves said this leads to litigation. It leads to things where people can’t clearly interpret what the Ordinance means and then it gets interpreted by the Court. He asked why can’t they just clearly state that existing flagpoles are exempt from this Ordinance.

Mayor Young asked is there a way to do that.

Mr. Turner said there is a way to do it. He said they tried to address it with this language and they can take out the word “ground” and just state that the flagpoles may be restored to the height previously authorized by the City. In other words it was legal then, it was permitted, constructed, and it will remain that way if it is damaged. He said that is what staff thought Council had in mind.
Mr. Graves said someone can come in and attack this. He said this is not clear to him.

Mr. Turner explained that they have to look at the clear language; is it ambiguous in any fashion.

Mr. Graves thought it was ambiguous. He felt that he could argue this in Court and make a case on it. He said it needs to be clear and it is not clear on what the intent is.

Mr. Falls suggested that they change the language to “except for flagpoles, which may be restored to the previously installed height.”

Mr. Graves asked why they can’t just state that previously installed flagpoles are exempt from this Ordinance.

Mr. Turner questioned existing flagpoles are exempt from application of this Ordinance.

Mr. Graves answered yes. He felt that made it a lot clearer.

Vice Mayor Moss agreed. She said that was their concern that they wanted to preserve everything that they had, as is.

Mr. Jeffries said that is what this language does. He asked are they suggesting adding another paragraph to this section.

Mr. Graves said they could add another paragraph. He said that he would just add a subparagraph to Section 38.16.

Mr. Turner said it would be added as subsection (f) (3) and would state, existing flagpoles are exempt from application of this Ordinance and remove the added wording to item (f) (2) that is listed in red.

Mayor Young referred to the size of flags in residential properties where it was originally 3 x 5 and now it is 33 x 5.

Mr. Jeffries said the size in residential districts is 15 square feet. He questioned if he wanted to increase it.

Mayor Young suggested to increase it to 4 x 6 (24 square feet).

Mr. Graves asked if they can make these changes and bring this back to them before the end of today’s hearing. He said that he doesn’t want to vote on something that is not finalized.

Vice Mayor Moss asked is there a problem with bringing it back to them at their next meeting.

Mr. Brackett asked can staff make the changes and bring it back before them prior to the end of today’s meeting.

Mr. Graves said that is what he is suggesting.
The changes to be made are: to add subsection (f) (3) - *existing flagpoles are exempt from application of this Ordinance*, to delete the last sentence of subsection (f) (2) listed in red, and to change the flag size in residential districts to 24 square feet.

Mr. Falls said there was also some discussion as to what happened to the flag at Ocean Drive and Beachland Boulevard. He reported that during turtle season the flag cannot be lit so it is removed as they close the Parks at sunset.

Mayor Young said they will proceed on and take public comment when they get ready to vote.

Mr. Brian Heady said they might have people in the audience who came for this item. He said this is one (1) of the things that he came for. He said they just had a discussion and it seems to him that before they spend more staff time they might want to listen to the public. He said the Council discussed the problems at their last meeting. He said the problem was him because the Council had their discussion, they were ready to vote, and they took public comment and he stood up and spoke about what he saw as a large problem. The problem at their last meeting was him. He said if they are going to take public comment about this issue the appropriate time would be right now while everything they just talked about is fresh in their minds and before they go back and draft something. He said the genesis of this change occurred about a year ago. He asked does any Councilmember know who directed this change. He said they all know that he attends just about every City Council meeting and if he is not in attendance, he is watching it and just about a year ago, which is when the City Attorney started working for the City. He doesn’t remember where this came from. Now he is starting to look at what happened about a year ago and one (1) of the things that happened was they hired a new City Attorney. He said that he is not sure why this change is needed. There hasn’t been people at the podium complaining about the United States flag, the height, or the size. He is not sure of the genesis of this change. He said the language they keep trying to put in the Ordinance was not his request at their last meeting and one (1) of the things that happened was they hired a new City Attorney. He said that he is not sure why this change is needed. There hasn’t been people at the podium complaining about the United States flag, the height, or the size. He is not sure of the genesis of this change. He said the language they keep trying to put in the Ordinance was not his request at their last meeting. His request was that any United States flag flying on any flagpole anywhere in the City is exempted from these restrictions. He said one (1) that he had in mind was Mr. Brackett’s because it is located on top of the Theatre building and it is interesting to hear the responses to cover his flag, they hear as long as it was put there legally. He said that he doesn’t care if it was legally put there or not. He thanked Mr. Brackett for having the flag up there.

Mayor Young said they have to proceed on. He appreciates Mr. Heady’s interest and his input, but they have other matters to contend with. He asked Mr. Heady to sum up his comments.

Mr. Heady said this is a public hearing.

Mayor Young said they have been listening and he would appreciate it if he would get to his point.

Mr. Heady said that he has a few more things to say.

Mayor Young said this is a matter of business before the City of Vero Beach and he would appreciate if he conformed to that intent.

Mr. Heady asked can they identify anything that he said that is not part of this Ordinance. He said if you just want to have him removed, you have that power. He said you just want me to shut up and sit down then he is not interested.
Mr. Heady in 1977, it was okay to have flags on the roof, but Mr. Brackett didn’t own the Theatre building in 1977, so that would be a problem. He said other wording they keep hearing is “if they are previously authorized” and that is not what he asked for. He asked for any United States flag flying on a flagpole anywhere in the City that it be grandfathered in. He said the Mayor asked if there is a way to do this and the answer is yes, put in a grandfather clause.

Mayor Young said that he thinks the City Council understands Mr. Heady’s intent. He asked Mr. Heady if there was anything further that he would like to say. He felt the Council has been amply patient and understands what his points are.

Mr. Heady said there was a Supreme Court decision mentioned and one (1) of the things about Supreme Court decisions is that Supreme Court decisions do not create law. They create case law, legal guidelines for people to follow in reading of the law, but the Supreme Court is not the body that makes law, it is the Legislative body. He said if they left it totally alone, it is not that you don’t conform to Reed vs Gilbert, it is that before you charge anyone with anything they need to be aware that Reed vs. Gilbert exists and make sure that their complaints against that particular flagpole and flags does not conflict with Reed vs Gilbert.

Mayor Young asked is there something additional to what you have said. He said you could be up here for the next 20 or 30-minutes.

Mr. Heady said that he has eight (8) more things.

Mayor Young said they have other business to attend to. He asked Mr. Heady to please sit down.

Mr. Heady asked are you going to remove me.

Mayor Young said that he is simply requesting Mr. Heady to allow the City Council to continue their meeting.

Mr. Heady said that he respectively declines the Mayor’s request because he is not finished with his statements and he is not finished with his concerns.

Mayor Young called Mr. Heady out of order and asked him to please sit down.

Mr. Heady questioned he is out of order. He asked what is out of order in anything that he has said. He said because of him standing up at their last meeting, they have new legislation proposed that does increase the height of the flagpole from 25-feet to 35-feet, which is a step in the right direction. He said that he went around and took some pictures of flagpoles that are easily seen...

Mayor Young asked Mr. Heady to sit down. He said if you don’t sit down then he is going to ask the Lieutenant to escort him to his seat because the Council does have further business that he would like to attend to.

Mr. Heady said if you are going to remove me from this, that is fine ...

Mayor Young said that he is not going to remove him from ...
Mr. Heady said then let him finish. He said the one (1) at Beachland, he was there the other day and took pictures and ...

Mr. Turner asked the Mayor if he would like to take a recess.

Mayor Young said no, he would like Mr. Heady to have a seat.

Mr. Heady said that he is not finished. He continued stating the one (1) at Beachland did not have a flag flying ...

Mr. Turner asked Mayor Young if he is directing Mr. Heady to sit down, that he is out of order, that he has exceeded his time and that he is being argumentative in that he is refusing to leave the podium.

Mayor Young said that he believes that is the case.

At this time, the Police Lieutenant approached Mr. Heady and asked him to please have a seat. That he is out of order.

Mr. Heady said that he is forcibly being removed by the Police Department and that is wrong and a violation of his rights. Every single one (1) of you Councilmembers should be outraged that this is happening. He said this is a public hearing to which the public is invited to speak publically.

Mayor Young said you have been provided ample opportunity. He thanked Mr. Heady.

Mr. Brackett said this came up because flagpoles are regulated by the City's sign ordinance. They were adopting their Sign Ordinance to make sure it was consistent and flagpoles became a part of that. It wasn't anything that had to do with flagpoles.

At this time, the City Council went to item 2-B) – Panhandling on today’s agenda.

The City Council reconvened at 11:50 a.m. and returned to discussing the Sign Ordinance.

Mr. Jeffries handed out to the City Council, pages 13 and 33 of the proposed Resolution where changes were made (on file in the City Clerk’s office). He reported that on page 13, item (c) (1), the 15-square feet in area has been changed to 24-square feet and on page 33, item (i) was added.

Vice Mayor Moss made a motion to approve the Ordinance with these amendments. Mr. Graves seconded the motion.

Mayor Young opened and closed public comments at 11:50 a.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

Mr. Jeffries asked if the approval was with the amendments.

Vice Mayor Moss made a motion to approve with the amendments. Mr. Graves seconded the motion and it passed 5-0 with Mr. Neville voting yes, Mr. Graves yes, Mr. Brackett yes, Vice Mayor Moss yes, and Mayor Young yes.

6) COVID-19
Mayor Young said there is a lot of public interest in the increase in cases they have seen with COVID. He wanted to make sure the public understands this is something that they are paying attention to. He said that he is going to show a video that was presented last Friday afternoon by Mr. Jason Brown, Indian River County Administrator, at the Indian River County update on Covid. He explained that the video is a laser beam particulate illustration on what happens to individuals pre-mask and post-mask. At this time, Mayor Young showed the video.

Mayor Young said if you look at the Florida Department of Health summary and look at Indian River County and the other counties, what jumped out to him that was very encouraging is that on June 20th and June 21st, they had 832 laboratory residents testing, which is almost four (4) times what they had previously in the numbers of testing and it was 4.4% positive. He reported that the weekly count (June 7th through June 14th) for COVID-like illnesses declined. He said that he doesn’t want to minimize the implications of this spike in cases, but it should be in context. The accumulative COVID-19 as of June 18th per 100,000, Indian River County was 20th lowest. The COVID-19 related deaths, Indian River County was the 4th lowest. He said the important point is to utilize face coverings in spaces where there is not social distancing. He reported that on June 19th they had the greatest number of cases, which was 56 positive cases. He said out of 56 cases, half were under 30-years old so it is the younger population who are testing positive. The most recent case was on June 21st and there were 18 positive cases and only two (2) were 65 and older so Indian River County appears to be protecting the vulnerable population pretty well. He said face masks are important and they are focusing on it.

Mr. Graves said that he wears his face mask. He said that he knows that the science is clear on distancing and washing your hands and he thinks they have done a pretty good job with it. He said they need to make sure they are maintaining their distancing and are washing their hands frequently. He felt that everyone agrees they are the number one ways to prevent transmission. It is disappointing to see the younger population not taking the social distancing aspect as worrisome. He said no one is immune to this disease. It is not just an old person’s disease. He said everyone needs to be careful and distance themselves. He said if they just use common sense they will get past this. He said they are not out of the woods until a vaccine comes.

Mr. Brackett said because this is affecting the younger crowd they are seeing the death rate drop. He said in the last 3 ½ weeks Indian River County has done more tests than they did the first two (2) months. He reported that the rate of positive is about 3.7%. He encouraged the citizens to continue social distancing and washing their hands.

Mr. Graves said they want to keep their businesses open so they want to make sure they practice these safe guidelines so that our businesses can stay open and people can go about their daily lives.

Vice Mayor Moss said that she has been known on more than one (1) occasion to eat chocolate off the kitchen floor if she drops it. She said in all seriousness, as you can see we’ve been observing social distancing. It’s really important and she wanted to reiterate what was said by the other Councilmembers to be sure to practice it when you are out. She said with handwashing their hands they have never been cleaner. She is happy to see the businesses coming back and they do need to continue to support them. She has received communications also from non-profits who are struggling financially so if you are in a

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position to help to please help. She said to please protect yourself with the handwashing, social distancing, and wearing a mask when interacting with people and are not able to observe social distancing.

Mr. Graves said that he was at the boardwalk last night and people were still ignoring the one way signs and the yellow paint. He asked can they doing anything to encourage them not to walk the wrong way.

Mr. Falls said that he will speak with the Police Chief.

Vice Mayor Moss said that happened to her in the mornings on more than one (1) occasion and she just asked the person in a polite way, even just to point it out because some people just don’t realize it.

Mr. Neville said we need to be aware of our surroundings and do the right thing.

Mayor Young reported that the next City Council meeting will be held on July 21st. He said we are 100% patriots here and he wished everyone a happy Fourth of July. Out of an abundance of caution the City is not doing the Fourth of July sponsored activities on the barrier island.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Today’s meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.

/tv