

**SPECIAL CALL CITY COUNCIL MINUTES  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 5:01 P.M.  
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

**PRESENT:** John Cotugno, Mayor; Linda Moore, Vice Mayor; Tracey Zudans, Councilmember; John Carroll, Councilmember; and Rey Neville, Councilmember **Also Present:** Monte Falls, City Manager; John Turner, City Attorney and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Cotugno led the Council and the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

**A) Roll Call**

The City Clerk called the roll.

**2. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**A) An Ordinance of the City of Vero Beach, Florida, Providing the Levy of Ad Valorem Taxes for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 at a Millage Rate of 2.7680 which equates to \$2.7680 per \$1,000 of Assessed Property Value.**

The City Clerk read the Ordinance by title only.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, reported that this budget was put together per the direction of the City Council. The proposed budget is at a millage rate of 2.7680, which is higher than the previous millage rate. They will be able to have all the new positions for the Police Department in place starting on October 1, 2023. He said that staff is here to answer any questions that they may have.

Mayor Cotugno opened and closed the public hearing at 5:05 p.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

Vice Mayor Moore brought up because they have decided to raise the millage rate there is an excess of \$9,000 left over in the budget. She brought up MainStreet and what most cities throughout the State of Florida give to their MainStreet organization. She said that MainStreet provides many services to the community in helping their downtown area. She would like to give them this \$9,000 to add to their budget so they have the ability to do other things.

Mr. Neville referred to the MainStreet contract that was signed in 1997. He said at that time the City agreed to contribute \$20,000 each year to MainStreet and the County was contributing \$15,000 each year. He said the County is no longer contributing that amount. He felt that the City Manager and the Planning Director should meet with MainStreet and renegotiate the contract before they agree to give MainStreet any additional funds.

Mr. Carroll noted that in the budget that they are passing they are already giving MainStreet \$24,000 a year. He did not realize that this has been in the budget since 1997.

Mayor Cotugno commented that \$24,000 doesn't go very far any more.

Mr. Neville wanted to know if this contract was being followed or if it needed to be amended before they allocate more funding to MainStreet.

Mayor Cotugno felt that Mr. Neville had a very valid point. He said if there is an agreement in place it needs to be looked at and updated if needed. He questioned if they could postpone approving additional funding until their next meeting when they hear this Ordinance at their second hearing. That should give staff enough time to have a new contract negotiated.

Mr. Falls did not know if there would be a new contract drafted by their next meeting. He said that Council can always consider amending the budget throughout the year so this would give them enough time to negotiate a new contract.

Mrs. Zudans commented that they presently are giving MainStreet \$24,000 as approved in the budget and she would be hesitant to increase that amount.

**Mr. Neville made a motion to approve the Ordinance. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion.**

The City Clerk read Section I and Section II of the Ordinance into the record.

**On a roll call vote the motion passed 4-1 with Mr. Neville voting yes, Mr. Carroll yes, Mrs. Zudans no, Vice Mayor Moore yes, and Mayor Cotugno yes.**

**B) An Ordinance of the City of Vero Beach, Florida, Adopting the Annual Budget of the City for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2023 and Ending September 30, 2024; Appropriating funds for the Operating Expenses, Supplies, and Personnel, and otherwise appropriating funds for the Efficient and Effective Operation of the Government of the City of Vero Beach and its Departments; Such appropriations being from anticipated revenue; providing a means to amend the Annual Budget to carry forward the funding of Purchase Orders, Work Orders, and Grants outstanding as of September 30, 2023; Providing a means to amend the Annual Budget to reflect Grants received after September 30, 2023; and authorizing the Transfer of Funds Appropriated so long as the total combined appropriations shall not be increased thereby; Providing an Effective Date.**

The City Clerk read the Ordinance by title only.

Mr. Falls reported that everything that was asked for and discussed at their budget hearings is included in this year's budget.

Mayor Cotugno opened the public hearing at 5:15 p.m.

Mr. Matt Haynes, Executive Director of MainStreet, commented that he did not speak earlier because he thought that the Ordinance passed was just on the mileage rate. He thanked Council for reconsidering their contract. He did not know there was a contract until tonight so he has not had time to review it. He noted that the contract goes back to 1997 and the dollars back then are a lot different than the dollars today. He wanted everyone to understand that MainStreet Vero Beach "eats what it kills." He said they make very little money on Downtown Friday. He said they do Downtown Friday, but they are not about Downtown Friday. He is hoping since he was hired in January that they have seen a difference in trying

to do the alignment and support with what the City Council is trying to do. He reiterated that Downtown Friday doesn't do anything for their organization, it just helps the City. He said the only reason they are making a little money now is because he is not paying for the stage, which is \$800.00 that the City was charging them.

Mr. Carroll brought up their membership and asked if people are joining MainStreet. Mr. Haynes said that people do join their membership.

Mrs. Zudans brought up that they are a 501 (c)(3) organization so they can fundraise.

Mr. Haynes wanted to make the argument that they should not be lumped into the 501 (c)(3) category the way that other non-profits are because they are an extension of the City. He said they are doing a lot of things for the City since he has been running MainStreet for the City. He reiterated that they are in a different category than your typical non-profit organization. He referred to the backup material he provided today from other cities involved with their MainStreet program and what contributions they are receiving (on file in the Clerk's office).

Mr. Neville asked how many business owners are there within the downtown district.

Mr. Haynes said there are over 150, but only about 60 of them are members. There is an apathy over the years that has taken place about what does MainStreet do. They want to know what their money is being used for. He has been trying to define that over the last seven (7) or eight (8) months. What he does not want to see happen and what the City Council should not want to see happen is the momentum to be killed right now. People keep saying that all they see them do is Downtown Friday. He said he could do Downtown Friday with one hand tied behind his back.

Vice Mayor Moore spoke as a business owner downtown and said that she has noticed the difference there since Mr. Haynes has been at the helm.

Mr. Neville asked Mr. Haynes if he was under the direction of the Board of Directors for MainStreet.

Mr. Haynes answered yes. He said he works well with the Board.

Mr. Mario Corbiciero, MainStreet Board member, stated that the Board works in conjunction with Mr. Haynes for the revitalization of downtown. He would hope that Council would be behind their goal to revitalize downtown as well. He questions when he sees funds being denied and things being limited. He said Vero Beach is a very nice area except for the downtown area, which in his opinion isn't very appealing and needs a lot of work. He would hope that the City would want to get behind them. He said the new Board has been in place since the beginning of January and they are trying to change the stigma that they are just here to host Downtown Friday. He said they are moving forward and he doesn't think they are asking for anything astronomical to have Council's support behind that. He doesn't see any other organization trying to revitalize downtown.

Mr. Carroll stated that he was surprised that there was a request to double the amount of money for MainStreet. He said they are receiving \$24,000 now and would like to receive \$40,000. He said that Council is sitting here making decisions and he had no idea that this 1997 contract existed. He felt that Mr. Corbiciero's comments were very disingenuous.

Mr. Corbiciero said that they were not disingenuous at all.

Mayor Cotugno stated that Mr. Neville has brought up a good point about the contract and Vice Mayor Moore brought up the increase. That is something they will discuss and will try to get a new contract written up that is amenable to both parties. Then Council will make a decision on what to do with the \$9,000. He commented that he takes umbrage to the fact that Mr. Corbiciero mentioned that this Council has done nothing. He said they have allocated money in their budget for MainStreet, they have worked a private/public partnership with Piper to cleanup Pocahontas Park, they have engaged on an on-going basis with the businesses downtown and they are making a lot of progress. He said they will continue to make progress because the commitment has been made by this "Team."

Mr. Neville commented that the business owners have some obligations to do some things downtown also. They need to sweep the trash that accumulates on City streets keep their plants watered so they are green and growing. He said the City also has obligations to do the right of way work so improvement is needed on both sides.

Mr. Falls stated that staff brought a budget originally to Council and the best to his knowledge the amount being requested by MainStreet was \$50,000. They put the \$24,000 that they normally gave to MainStreet in the budget because they did not have at the time any room in the budget to allocate any additional funds. He will talk to MainStreet about a new contract, come back to Council and discuss what that "ask" is, but just for the record the original "ask" was for \$50,000.

**Mr. Neville made a motion to approve the Ordinance. Vice Mayor Moore seconded the motion and it passed 4-1 with Mr. Neville voting yes, Mr. Carroll yes, Mrs. Zudans no, Vice Mayor Moore yes, and Mayor Cotugno yes.**

### **3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

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