

**SPECIAL CALL CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2022 5:10 P.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Robbie Brackett, Mayor; Rey Neville, Vice Mayor; Honey Minuse, Councilmember; Bob McCabe, Councilmember and John Cotugno, Councilmember **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.

2. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A) An Ordinance of the City of Vero Beach, Florida, Providing the Levy of Ad Valorem Taxes for the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 at a Millage Rate of 2.6964 which equates to \$2.6964 per \$1,000 of Assessed Property Value.

The City Clerk read the Ordinance by title only.

Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director, explained that the first issue they are to discuss today is the percentage increase in the millage rate over the rolled-back rate that is needed to fund the budget. She reported that the proposed budget is funded at a millage rate of 2.6964, which is 19.06% greater than the rolled-back rate of 2.2648. This increase of tax revenue, which is about \$1.65 million, was used to offset the decrease in the amount of residual cash from the electric utility sale and to fund the increases in personnel costs, primarily salaries and health insurance.

Vice Mayor Neville made a motion to adopt the Ordinance. Mr. McCabe seconded the motion.

Mayor Brackett opened the public hearing at 5:13 p.m.

Mr. Brian Heady said at the last budget hearing he was removed by the police after the Mayor ruled him out of order. He asked if any Councilmember could tell him why he was ruled out of order. He said they have Police Officers present and that is an expense to the budget. If they don't have any reason for removing people they could probably eliminate that as an expense. He felt it was reasonable to expect that Councilmembers know what the money they are spending is for, so they probably should know why citizens are removed. He said they were at the meeting and they don't want to give him a reason why he was removed. He said the Marina goes to this millage rate and the Marina was losing a lot of money and the City taxpayers paid off the Marina debt. Now their idea is to spend more taxpayer money to build a bigger Marina. He said that doesn't make a lot of sense. If they couldn't make money on a smaller Marina then they probably shouldn't be building a bigger one. He said part of the rate that they are going to approve pays for legal defense on a lot of things.

Mayor Brackett advised Mr. Heady that he has been speaking for four (4) minutes and has 30-seconds left.

Mr. Heady asked is there a time limit on these public hearings.

Mayor Brackett answered yes.

Mr. Heady asked when did the time limit on budget hearings start. He said this is a public hearing mandated by the State and in the mandate that they must have this hearing there is no time limit. There is an opportunity for citizens to discuss the budget and get answers and so far he has not received any answers.

Mayor Brackett told Mr. Heady that he has been speaking for over five (5) minutes and his time is up. He asked Mr. Heady to have a seat.

Mr. Heady said that he was not done.

Mayor Brackett called Mr. Heady out of order.

At this time, a Police Officer escorted Mr. Heady from the podium.

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. Cotugno voting yes, Mr. McCabe yes, Mrs. Minuse yes, Vice Mayor Neville yes, and Mayor Brackett no.

B) An Ordinance of the City of Vero Beach, Florida, Adopting the Annual Budget of the City for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2022 and Ending September 30, 2023; 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, 2022; Providing a means to amend the Annual Budget to reflect Grants received after September 30, 2022; 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.

Ms. Lawson reported that the budget before them today is unchanged from the first public hearing.

Mr. Cotugno was concerned about how they go forward on this. He said they cannot change what has happened in the past and they cannot change where they are currently. He hoped they would take a look going forward of where potential revenue could be received by the City and where they could maximize the assets they have in place. He said this came to light for him when they were discussing the water and utility rates. He said as being a member of the Florida League of Cities Utilities National Resources and Public Works Committee, he felt they should have discussions in the not so distant future regarding mitigating the risk they have in operating the utility by maximizing their revenue from that utility. He said contrary to popular opinion, their rates are extremely competitive towards the low competitive range when compared to anyone on the Treasure Coast and outside the Treasure Coast. He said they need to take care of their City and in going forward they cannot neglect potential revenue streams, which will help the citizens in mitigating the millage rate increases, etc. He said when the Utility Study was done, he urged staff to take a hard look at how they were operating the City for ways they could try to maintain the most efficient operating entity that they have on behalf of their citizens to mitigate what is going to be future pressure on the City as they move forward. He said the City is not growing and the County is exploding around them. That explosion is putting demand on the City's services. He said people want to come to Vero Beach because they have the best beaches, restaurants, and entertainment.

Mr. McCabe said this budget was well done and well presented.

Mr. McCabe made a motion to approve the budget (Ordinance). Vice Mayor Neville seconded the motion.

Mayor Brackett opened and closed the public hearing at 5:26 p.m., with no one wishing to be heard.

On a roll call vote the motion passed 5-0 with Mr. Cotugno voting yes, Mr. McCabe yes, Mrs. Minuse yes, Vice Mayor Neville yes, and Mayor Brackett yes.

Mayor Brackett said they have had times in the City where they have left money on the table. He said it is good to leave money on the table because that money belongs to the citizens. He said that he understands Mr. Cotugno's point, but it is good when you can leave the money on the citizen's table. He said they could collect it later if they have to. He does understand the problems that it might cause.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

/sp