
Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held September 7, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Commission Room of City Hall, after having been properly advertised, with the following members present: Mayor Dorothea Taylor Bogert, Commissioners: Keith Cowie, Richard Hamann, Jack Myers, and Bill Sterling. Also, present were: City Manager Jeffrey Tillman, City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr., City Clerk Brandon Henry, and Police Chief Terry Storie.

Mayor Dorothea Taylor Bogert declared a quorum present, and the Meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Brad Bennett, Auburndale Community Church, and a salute to the flag.

Motion by Commissioner Myers, seconded by Commissioner Hamann, to approve Minutes of the City Commission Meeting of August 21, 2023. Upon vote, all ayes.

City Manager Jeffrey Tillman commended staff for their response to Hurricane Idalia. He presented the event calendar for September through November. St. Albans Church has their 125th Anniversary on September 23rd.

Mayor Taylor Bogert recognized Greater Auburndale Chamber of Commerce President Alex Cam, who was in attendance.

Mayor Taylor Bogert asked if there was public comment on any item not on the agenda. There was no public comment.

1. ORDINANCE #1754 AMENDING CITY CODE – GARBAGE & REFUSE RATES

City Manager Tillman presented a slide outlining the history of curbside recycling contracts and associated rates. He presented a graphic depicting Sanitation revenue and expenses from 2012 to 2022.

Finance Director Christopher Reeder explained the current status of recycling and its future. He presented a slide outlining the first option, entering into a 1-year recycling collection agreement with Waste Management. He presented a slide outlining the second option, having the City undertake curbside collection. He presented a slide depicting the third option, expanding the central collection site. He presented a graphic comparing the proposed rates of the three options as compared to neighboring and comparable municipalities.

City Manager Tillman stated that staff recommends the lowest cost option of expanding the central collection site.

Public Works / Public Utilities Director John Dickson presented a slide outlining the various operational changes should the central collection site be expanded.

Commissioner Myers asked what are the hours of the collection site?

Mr. Dickson answered it is currently 24/7. We intend to keep it that way, as long as it does not become a dumping site. Occasionally on Mondays, the dumpsters are overflowing, so we clean it. But right now, there is no intent to fence it off, we would leave it open and monitor it.

Mayor Taylor Bogert asked if we will not be purchasing additional dumpsters unless we feel like we need them?

Mr. Dickson answered no, we would like to go ahead and bring out the additional dumpsters.

Mayor Taylor Bogert asked if that is something we purchase?

Mr. Dickson answered no.

City Manager Tillman presented a slide outlining community outreach regarding the recycling changes. Staff recommends approval of proposed Ordinance #1754, increasing operations of the central recycling collection site at Public Works, eliminating curbside recycling, and increasing household garbage and refuse rates.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1754 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 11-5 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE (ESTABLISHING FEES FOR GARBAGE AND TRASH REMOVAL AND CHARGES FOR COMMERCIAL GARBAGE AND REFUSE COLLECTION); AND SETTING AN EFFECTIVE DATE**, by title only.

Mayor Taylor Bogert asked for public comment.

Brian Bertges, 1517 Auburn Oaks Circle, said he had several questions. Unincorporated Auburndale still has curbside pickup for recycling, is there any knowledge on their contract? He asked if the initial cost of purchasing trucks and staff would decrease over time after the initial capital investment? What would be the long-term benefits? He said people are going to have their trash picked up in recycling bins and not realize it is going to the landfill. It is a disservice and appears to be a bait and switch when they think they are doing something positive when it is actually going to the landfill. Then you think of the added costs of landfills over time – does that come from County taxes?

City Manager Tillman answered that Polk County also has Waste Management which ends in September 2024. Based on his conversations, they will not continue recycling services in Unincorporated Auburndale as well. Regarding rates, we reevaluate our sanitation rates annually. If there is the need to adjust the rate, we can adjust the rates – whether up or down. It is something that we would have to monitor. We do have the ability to bring rate changes at any time for the Commission to look at. Regarding the last question – we decided that we would leave the existing recycling cans out there to use. We could take them away, but instead of taking good cans away and not having any use of them – we decided from a staff level to let citizens still use them, which is why we will message as much as possible. But if some point, the cans become damaged – they get removed from inventory and citizens will only have the one blue garbage can, and if they want another can – they can pay for an additional can.

Mayor Taylor Bogert said the City owns those cans. Pulling those out of inventory when individuals are willing to utilize them would be a waste. A lot of people use more than one can, some have three or four. They would have to purchase another one. But this would allow them to continue another can.

Commissioner Myers asked what is the current rate of recycling contamination?

Mr. Dickson answered he does not have the exact number.

Commissioner Myers explained the County's recycling contract and rate, and how it is hard to compare due to the other fees on top of their ad valorem fee.

Commissioner Hamann said based on his conversations with the County, he understands they will not be staying in the recycling business.

Mayor Taylor Bogert said as an informational point, with the current contract – if the tipping fee for the Materials Recovery Facility exceeded the dump tipping fee, they took the load to the dump regardless because we did not want the citizens to pay more. The tipping fee at the dump is \$36, and they used to pay us to pick it up because they were making a lot of money on it. The tipping fee at the Materials Recovery Facility is \$145, so it is a significant increase that the citizens would have to absorb.

Maulissa Braverman, 1918 Lake Ariana Boulevard, said without seeing the website and marketing materials that are already being prepared – it is going to be important to be specific of why this decision was made, the cost factor of all three options. If you are at the Commission meeting, it makes sense. But if you are not here, you are going to have a problem with not having that service. But if they see the different options as far as costs, and why the Commission is making the decision they are making – it needs to be communicated specifically to that financial point, so people understand when it affects their pocket, and pushing the fact that recycling is still

available, but you have to be proactive about it. Polk County has done a good job with doing a mailer regarding contamination education. It was very attractive, so more people probably paid attention. It should be communicated in that manner, and a mailer is not a terrible idea. But if you reach out to people, not just via electronic media – especially considering the age of Polk County, there are a lot of people still paper friendly, a mailer would be a good approach for education.

Daniel Felice, 102 Perry Avenue, said we just received this through Facebook about these costs coming in on us. It is shocking, especially the first option which is a 48% increase. It is very shocking. Over the past year, the company that is doing the recycling has been very sloppy. They are not showing up or coming on Saturdays and Sundays. There is no consistency on pick up. Over the past couple months, it has been a little better. He has complained to the City several times about this. With these increases, he is blessed - but what about those working everyday and just trying to pay the bills.

Marivi Bertges, 1517 Auburn Oaks Circle, said she just stumbled upon the City Commission meeting and the recycling issue when she was trying to request a book from the library's website. She was surprised. She is wondering what the communication has been to residents that there is a change coming. We were gone most of the summer, so maybe we missed a mailer or it was printed on the water bill. She knows the Commission must make a financial decision, and she wonders if residents knew that recycling was going away, that there would be more action on residents' parts. She knows that contamination in the bins is a huge headache, and it drives her bonkers. She knows there are problems. But she thinks there are people invested in the idea of recycling cans. She knows China is not buying our recycling anymore, so that drives down opportunity for selling it. We need new solutions. She is wondering how the message has been communicated to residents.

City Manager Tillman said we had a public workshop years ago, we were able to get feedback at that point. Looking at the landscape of recycling, we are probably one of the first ones to have our contract up in the County. He does not think we will be the first to take this step forward. But with the contract expiring, it is time to address it – which is why we are bringing this information up to the Commission. This is the opportunity to educate the entire City Commission at one time about what is in store for us.

Mayor Taylor Bogert said as with any meeting that we have, there are always public hearings and notifications, and any citizen is welcome to come – and those were done according to the requirements for this change.

Ms. Bertges asked how was it communicated?

Commissioner Myers answered it was communicated on our Facebook page and advertised in the newspaper.

Mayor Taylor Bogert and Commissioner Hamann said it was printed in the newspaper.

Commissioner Hamann said it was on Facebook and the City's website.

Mr. Felice asked how many followers do we have on Facebook?

Communication and Information Manager Seth Teston answered the City has around 10,000 followers on Facebook.

Motion by Commissioner Cowie, seconded by Commissioner Hamann, to approve Ordinance #1754 increasing operations of the central recycling collection site at Public Works, eliminating curbside recycling, and increasing household garbage and refuse rates, as read on second and final reading.

Commissioner Cowie said he was on the Commission when we started curbside recycling many years ago. We were all very excited to do that. It is sad today to make that change. The economic reasons certainly support it. He does have concerns about getting the message out to everybody. He has concerns about Mr. Bertges comment that people think they are doing the right thing, but it is going to the landfill. There will be people who

would not read their emails or water bills or mailers. He wants us to do everything possible to get that message out and make people aware.

City Manager Tillman said there were good comments from Ms. Braverman as well on educating about this change.

Commissioner Hamann said in his conversations, people are suggesting discontinuing curbside recycling. It is too much of an expense. When they found out it was going to the landfill, they were really upset.

Mayor Taylor Bogert concurred. As Mr. Felice commented, we have an older population in a lot of areas on a fixed income and having a significant change on a monthly basis impacts them. It may not be a lot, but it can be their whole weeks pay or a meal or several meals. That was her perspective, what was the least financial impact. We still have recycling available. It might be a different story if we did not have it available, but it is there and has always been there – and those invested in it have the opportunity to do it.

Commissioner Hamann said we had that recycling center down by the barn before we went to curbside. It was available then and still will be.

Upon vote, all ayes.

Commissioner Sterling said it is his understanding that everything collected curbside will go to the landfill, correct?

Mayor Taylor Bogert confirmed.

Commissioner Sterling asked everything collected at the collection site will be sent to the Materials Recovery Facility in Lakeland?

City Manager Tillman answered it is collected by Republic Services.

Commissioner Sterling said he was there last Monday and there were all kinds of junk in those containers. We need to make sure we have some good signs. We need to be simplistic.

Mayor Taylor Bogert thanked Commissioner Sterling.

Mayor Taylor Bogert closed the Regular Meeting and opened the Public Hearing.

2. PUBLIC HEARING – FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 TAX MILLAGE LEVY & ANNUAL BUDGET

City Manager Tillman said the Public Hearing has been advertised in accordance with the Florida Statutes regarding the method of fixing tax millage. This Public Hearing is the first of two (2) required Public Hearings with the second scheduled for September 19, 2023.

The proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 is balanced with Total Revenue and Total Expenditures of \$87,537,844 before interfund transfers. Expenditures include general operating expenses of \$45,979,755. Capital Improvements of \$41,397,624 and Contingency Reserve of \$160,465.

City Manager Tillman presented a slide summarizing changes and adjusted Contingency figures.

The Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 Budgets includes all changes made during the Regular City Commission meetings of May 1, 2023 (Payroll), May 15, 2023 (Capital Outlay), June 19, 2023 (Expenditures), and July 24, 2023 (Revenues).

Revenues from ad-valorem taxes for Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 are estimated at \$9,030,000 and based upon the operating millage rate of 4.2515. That is the lowest millage rate of cities in Polk County.

The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget also includes the proposed Five-Year Schedule of Capital Improvements (CIP) for the City's Public Safety, Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments. This schedule, which is a requirement of the City's Comprehensive Plan, assists the City Commission in prioritizing future capital needs throughout the City and is updated annually during the budget process to include a "new fifth year".

A balanced Fiscal Year 2025 Budget (2nd Year Budget) is also being presented for the Commission's conceptual approval. The Fiscal Year 2025 Budget will be reviewed by City Staff and the City Commission during the next Budget update process in order to accommodate needs that have arisen since the planned budget was prepared.

The proposed Ordinances were prepared by the Finance Director and reviewed by the City Manager and City Attorney. If approved on first reading, the proposed Ordinances will be presented for second and final reading on Tuesday, September 19, 2023. Staff recommends approving the proposed Ordinance establishing the tax millage levy and the proposed Ordinance adopting the Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Budgets.

Mayor Taylor Bogert asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

Mayor Taylor Bogert closed the Public Hearing and reopened the Regular Commission Meeting.

3. ORDINANCE #1755 ADOPTING FISCAL YEAR 2024 TAX MILLAGE LEVY

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1755 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA, ESTABLISHING THE TAX LEVY FOR THE YEAR 2023 ON ALL PROPERTY WITHIN THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE AS SHOWN BY THE 2023 ASSESSMENT ROLL: ESTABLISHING THE MILLAGE RATE AT 4.2515, WHICH IS A 8.1% INCREASE OVER THE ROLLED BACK RATE OF 3.9317, AND PROVIDING FOR THE APPLICATION THEREOF; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE,** by title only.

Motion by Commissioner Hamann, seconded by Commissioner Sterling, to approve Ordinance #1755 adopting Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Millage Levy, as read on first reading. Upon vote, all ayes.

4. ORDINANCE #1756 ADOPTING FISCAL YEAR 2024 & FISCAL YEAR 2025 ANNUAL BUDGETS

City Manager Tillman said staff recommends approval of Ordinance No. 1756.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1756 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 ANNUAL BUDGET; CONCEPTUALLY APPROVING THE FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 ANNUAL BUDGET; ADOPTING THE FIVE (5) YEAR SCHEDULE OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS (CIP); AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE,** by title only.

Motion by Commissioner Sterling, seconded by Commissioner Cowie, to approve Ordinance #1756 adopting Fiscal Year 2024 & Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Budgets, as read on first reading. Upon vote, all ayes.

5. FISCAL YEAR 2022 EDWARD BYRNE JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT

City Manager Tillman said each year the Board of County Commissioners allocates federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant funds for various law enforcement projects within Polk County. These funds may be used by local units of government to support a broad range of activities to prevent and control crime and to improve the criminal justice system. The Fiscal Year 2022 allocation for the County is \$184,837.00 with Auburndale approved for \$21,300.00.

The Auburndale Police Department plans to utilize this grant for protective ballistic shields.

All Polk County municipalities are requested to approve the State allocation. City Manager Tillman presented a slide outlining the State allocation.

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City Manager Tillman said staff recommends approval of the distribution of the Fiscal Year 2022 Edward Byrne Grant and authorize the Mayor to execute the support letter.

Mayor Taylor Bogert asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

Motion by Commissioner Cowie, seconded by Commissioner Hamann, to approve the distribution of the Fiscal Year 2022 Edward Byrne Grant and authorize the Mayor to execute the support letter. Upon vote, all ayes.

City Manager Tillman said regarding the budget, one of the City Commission's biggest decisions and responsibilities is the adoption of the budget. He thanked staff for their work.

Commissioner Hamann commended City Attorney Murphy.

Mayor Taylor Bogert thanked all the Department Directors for their hard work and the smooth process.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:51:22 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Minutes are true and correct.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brandon Henry', is written over a horizontal line.

Brandon Henry, City Clerk