

CITY OF LARGO CITY COMMISSION WORK SESSION

August 13, 2019
Minutes

COMMISSION PRESENT: Commissioners Smith, Fenger, Holmes, Robinson, Holck, Carroll, Mayor Brown

PARTICIPATING STAFF PRESENT: City Mgr. Schubert, City Clerk Bruner, Economic Dev. Coord. Rojas-Norton, OPB Mgr. Payne, OPB Dir. Semones, Engineering Services Dir. Woloszynski, Building Official Hatton, Community Standards Mgr. Schofield

The Work Session began at 4:00 pm.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Business Spotlight – Jersey College

The Jersey College of Nursing is located at the Largo Medical Center, at 2025 Indian Rocks Road. Founded in New Jersey in 2003, the college has two campuses in its home state, and three campuses in Florida, in Tampa, Jacksonville and Fort Lauderdale. The sixth campus was opened in Largo in 2016 through a partnership with Hospital Corporation of America (HCA). The Nurse Residency Track is an on-site hospital-based Registered Nursing program through an affiliation between the hospital and the college. The Nurse Residency Track of the professional Nursing program educates and prepares students for entry level registered nursing positions in a variety of health care settings. The program consists of course work in nursing, science, general education, and clinical practice at select health care institutions. The Largo campus is led by Dean of Nursing Betty VanStedum, MSN, RN, Campus Administrator Maggie Jeffers and Assistant Campus Administrator Becky Oravec. The campus offers connected classrooms with modern technology, a hospital-based setting for hands on practice, and learning centers where students can spend time studying, working in groups and consulting with faculty. For more information, visit Jerseycollege.edu.

Discussion:

Ms. Rojas-Norton questioned the programs offered. Ms. VanStedum stated that there are two 2 year tracks; one for LPN to RN and one generic RN program. She stated that there are currently 140 students. Ms. Jeffers stated that challenges they faced were branding, qualified faculties and having students with the passion and aptitude for the program. Ms. VanStedum stated that the program was very vigorous, however they wanted students to give back to the community. Mayor Brown questioned the age group. Ms. Jeffers stated that Largo students trended to mid twenties. Ms. VanStedum stated that the average hours per week for students was 20-24. Commissioner Smith stated that he could put them in touch with PSTA regarding transportation alternatives for students.

PRESENTATIONS

FY 2020 Budget Direction

On July 1, 2019, the City Manager's FY 2020 Proposed Annual Budget was submitted to the City Commission. The City Commission reviewed the Proposed Budget on Friday, July 12, 2019 at a joint Work Session with the Finance Advisory Board (FAB). At that meeting, the City Commission asked the FAB to provide feedback on several specific items, in addition to the assignments outlined in the Resolution establishing the Board. Collectively, the Board provided formal recommendations on the following items:

1. Parks Administration Building: The recommendation is to reconstruct the Parks Administration Facility using General Fund debt.
2. St. Petersburg college Intern Program: The recommendation is support participation in the St. Pete College Fellowship program.
3. General Proposed Budget & Strategic Initiatives: The recommendation is to support the City Manager's FY

2020 Proposed Budget.

4. Property Tax Rate Discussion: The recommendation is to support a 5.7000 millage rate.

Minutes from the FAB Meeting are attached to this memo.

Changes From Proposed Budget:

Each year there are several changes made to the Proposed Budget prior to the Tentative Budget adoption. Those changes include re-budgeted items, corrections, and the addition/deletion of revenues and expenditures due to new information. The total amount of FY 2020 expenditure reconciliation items is \$3,021,600, of which a reduction of \$138,400 is included in the General Fund. A complete list of changes is attached, and a summary of the major changes is provided below:

- Health Insurance premium adjustment: Initially budgeted as a 12% increase over FY 2019, reduced to 6.7%.
All funds savings = \$554,000; General Fund savings = \$374,000
- Rebudget and increase of the Downtown Multimodal Trailhead project
- Increase estimated year-end expenditure for the Downtown Multimodal Segment 1 construction
- Increase in the estimated year-end expenditure for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Operations Building
- Additional FDOT Highway beautification grant funding
- Additional Rosery Road Phase 2a (block adjacent to WalMart) design budget

In order to prepare the FY 2020 Budget for adoption in September, staff is requesting direction on final expenditure changes, including the Parks Administration Facility Reconstruction and the St. Petersburg College Fellowship program. Staff is also seeking direction on the millage rate based on the ultimate expenditure changes directed by the City Commission. To support the City Commission's decision-making process, a tax rate analysis has been attached to this memo. The analysis assumes funding these initiatives and provides the 5-year ending fund balance in the General Fund for each millage rate alternative. 5.6200 is the rate that provides the most similar 5-year ending fund balance position to what was included in the City Manager's FY 2020 Proposed Budget. Based on this information, the City Manager is recommending 5.6200 as the proposed millage rate for the FY 2020 Tentative Budget.

Bronson Oudshoff represented the Finance Advisory Board (FAB).

Discussion:

Mr. Oudshoff stated that FAB discussed the two items as directed by the City Commission at the last budget meeting and voted unanimously to support reconstruction of the Parks building and the SPC Fellowship program. He stated that the board voted 5-1 to support the overall budget and tax rate.

Commissioner Holmes suggested adding a shelter for Largo Central Railroad to the Parks building project. Mr. Schubert stated that if directed to include the Parks building in the budget, staff will have discussions with the railroad. Commissioner Smith questioned Phase 2a of the Rosery Road project. Mr. Payne explained that this was additional scope to address concerns at the east side of Missouri and the Walmart turning radius, ahead of a future project. He stated that \$175,000 for design included all design work for the whole area adjacent to Walmart. Commissioner Smith questioned the \$310,000 CSX project. Mr. Woloszynski stated that the tub crossing project was intended to be a more enduring project. He stated that the two projects were intended to be done during the summer months in 2020. Commissioner Smith stated his concern that CSX had jurisdiction. Mr. Schubert stated that by law railroads had primacy in these issues.

Commissioner Smith questioned the line item for City Commission devices. Mr. Schubert explained that the intent was to produce less paper and that Commissioners who preferred the Apple devices could keep them. Vice Mayor Carroll thanked the Finance Advisory Board for their work and questioned their feedback on the process. Mr. Oudshoff stated that it worked pretty well and allowed them to focus on what the City Commission wanted them to focus on, and also allowed them sufficient leeway to discuss things that mattered

to them. Mayor Brown stated that events have been pulled back from Ulmer Park due to budgetary constraints, however area businesses and residents have communicated to him that they would like events to be brought back. He stated that there may be some interest from the Suncoast Performing Arts Foundation in funding events or concerts. Mr. Schubert stated that low key events would not cost a lot of money. There was no objection from the rest of the City Commission. Mayor Brown also thanked the Finance Advisory Board and staff for their work on the budget.

City Commission Direction:

There was consensus to include in the budget the reconstruction of the Parks building and the SPC Fellowship program at a millage rate of 5.62 mills.

Business Tax Receipt Update

The purpose of this Work Session item is to update the City Commission on the City of Largo's Business Tax Receipt (BTR) collection program and to propose amending the City's Code of Ordinances to correct outdated verbiage, clarify staff responsibilities, align the penalty fee structure to reflect the language in State Statute 205.053, use Special Magistrate as the final step in enforcement of delinquent BTRs and propose a limited amnesty period to assist non-compliant existing businesses in obtaining their first BTR.

The Building, Community Standards and Economic Development Divisions, along with the Fire Department, made an extra effort in FY 2019 to educate both new and existing businesses within Largo on the importance of paying their BTR. The importance of a business obtaining a BTR is threefold. First is the significance of this revenue source supporting the City's General Fund. Second, the information submitted by a business when applying for and obtaining a BTR provides critical information to the Police Department, Fire Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services so they can render assistance in an emergency. Lastly, allowing some businesses to not pay their BTR is not fair to the businesses that are in compliance with Chapter 22, of the Code of Ordinances requiring all businesses operating within the City to pay for all applicable taxes.

The increased collection efforts to date have included mailings, fliers, face to face contact, phone calls and site visits. The outcome of these efforts has been an increase in collection of over \$80,000 from FY 2018 to FY 2019. This notable increase is in part due to a few apartment complexes and larger businesses coming into compliance and paying back taxes and late fees owed on delinquent BTRs. Over the past five years the tax revenue collected has remained fairly constant, with a five year average of \$639,962 as follows:

FY 2015: \$635,671 (BTRs 3,918)
FY 2016: \$628,913 (BTRs 3,749)
FY 2017: \$630,456 (BTRs 3,433)
FY 2018: \$611,918 (BTRs 3,030)
FY 2019: \$692,850 (BTRs 3,385)
FY 2020: Approximately 4,400 BTR renewals mailed

In an effort to collect unpaid BTRs when education is not sufficient to achieve compliance, staff would like to use Community Standards personnel to issue a Notice of Violation leading to a Special Magistrate hearing as the final step in achieving compliance for unpaid and/or delinquent BTRs.

The Community Standards Division will take the following steps when assisting a business that began operation without first obtaining or renewing a BTR, prior to sending any case to the Special Magistrate.

- Initial contact with the business manager or owner informing them of the requirement and benefits of having a BTR. Written information will be provided on how to apply for and obtain the BTR. They will be given 10 business days to obtain a BTR. A repeat violator will be given a Notice of Violation (NOV) and 10 business days to obtain a BTR.

- If the business has not obtained a BTR within 10 business days of initial contact and is not a repeat violator, Community Standards will make a second visit issuing a verbal warning requiring the BTR be obtained within the next 10 business days. If the BTR is not obtained within the 10 business days an NOV will be issued. No further action will be taken if the BTR is obtained within the 10 days.
- In the event the business is issued an NOV and does not obtain a BTR within the time frame given, the case will be referred to the Special Magistrate.

Summary of recommendations:

- Recommending an amendment to Section 22-107(a) of the Code of Ordinances to reflect the 25% penalty fee in § 205.053(2) for engaging in business prior to obtaining a BTR.
- In order to encourage compliance prior to issuing an NOV and a Special Magistrate hearing, staff is recommending to not administratively assess the \$250 penalty fee found in § 205.053(3) when a BTR is over 150 days delinquent. The recommendation is to assess the \$250 penalty fee at the order of the Special Magistrate if the payment is not made within 150 days of the initial notice of tax due.
- In order to assist existing established businesses that have never had a BTR, staff is recommending the City Commission adopt a resolution of an amnesty program for FY 2020 and FY 2021 to assist existing established businesses that are non-compliant. The amnesty program would not apply to businesses who have started and not completed the permitting or BTR process.

Should the City Commission wishes to move forward with the proposed increased effort in BTR compliance, amendments to the Code of Ordinances and a Resolution for a limited amnesty program, staff will begin the Resolution and amendments process and return to the City Commission following a review by the City Attorney's office and the Planning Board.

Discussion:

Vice Mayor Carroll asked whether staff was monitoring BTR legislation. Mr. Hatton stated that every year the legislature talks about eliminating BTR's or changing the fees. Vice Mayor Carroll stated that Ms. Reed and others who are on Florida League of Cities (FLC) committees needed to know what they can do to help staff with this issue. Commissioner Holmes questioned the number of BTR's mailed out, which Mr. Hatton estimated at 3,500. He explained how businesses got in a non renewal status and that staff endeavored to capture as many businesses as possible, including out of business and non renewed. Mr. Schofield stated that staff will also look at the businesses reported to be out of business. Mayor Brown stated his concern that it was difficult to see what the cost of BTR's will be and requested that this list be made more accessible.

City Commission Direction:

It was the consensus of the City Commission to support using the Special Magistrate, amend the Code of Ordinances to include statutory requirements and to prepare a Resolution for an amnesty program.

BOARD/COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Forward Pinellas – Commissioner Smith stated that they did not have a meeting this month.

Homeless Leadership Board – Commissioner Holck stated that their meeting was canceled.

North Pinellas Cultural Alliance – Commissioner Robinson had no report.

Suncoast League of Cities – Vice Mayor Carroll stated that there is a Florida League of Cities conference this week, during which the Suncoast League will have a brief meeting.

Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority – Commissioner Fenger had no report.

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council – Mayor Brown stated that they met yesterday and had a presentation by Southern Alliance for Clean Energy regarding electric vehicles. He stated that they were very complimentary of Largo’s efforts.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSION, MAYOR, CITY MANAGER

Vice Mayor Carroll questioned the status of the City’s grease trap program enforcement. He stated that he received emails about drainage in the canal adjacent to East Bay Country Club and asked that this issue be looked at.

Commissioner Smith requested that staff put together an educational campaign regarding flushable wipes.

Request by Commissioner Robinson that staff implement electric vehicle fleet goals. He stated that direction from the City Commission is needed. He also requested that staff create regulations requiring charging stations in new construction and for staff to bring these items to a Work Session. He urged everyone to be careful driving once school is back in session.

Commissioner Holmes stated that Paradise Island Mobile Home Park had a drainage ditch one one side of their property that Duke Energy is telling the residents is Largo’s responsibility, however the trees are on private property. Mr. Schubert stated that the City will remove some of the trees once Duke trims them out of the power lines.

NOTE: Commissioner Smith left the meeting at 5:31 pm.

Commissioner Holck thanked Ms. Semones, Mr. Payne and the Finance Advisory Board (FAB) for their work on the budget.

Commissioner Fenger also thanked staff and the FAB for their work on the budget.

Mayor Brown thanked Officer Jenkins for hosting him on a Police ride along on Friday night.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Request by Mayor Brown for a listing of Business Tax Receipt costs by business type and size be made more accessible.
2. Request by Commissioner Holck that business owners be provided with information on what is included in a fire inspection.
3. Request by Vice Mayor Carroll for the status of the City’s grease trap program enforcement.
4. Request by Commissioner Smith that staff put together an educational campaign regarding flushing wipes.
5. Request by Request by Commissioner Robinson that staff implement electric vehicle fleet goals and create regulations for charging stations in new construction and bring back to a Work Session.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 pm.