



MINUTES

SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2022, AT 5:01 P.M.

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH, 2200 A1A South, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Samora called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Commission recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Donald Samora, Vice Mayor Rumrell, and Commissioners Margaret England, Undine C. George, and Beth Sweeny.

Also present were City Manager Max Royle, City Attorney Jacob McCrea, Police Chief Daniel Carswell, Police Commander T.G. Harrell, City Clerk Dariana Fitzgerald, Finance Director Patty Douylliez, Building Official Brian Law, and Public Works Director Bill Tredik.

Mayor Samora advised that this would be a special meeting to adopt the millage and budget for FY 2023, but asked the Police Chief and City Manager for updates regarding preparations for the approaching storm. City Manager Royle advised that Public Works started preparations before the weekend by making sure the vehicles are fueled. Finance Director Douylliez advised that this should strictly be a budget meeting to address the millage and the budget first and that the storm preparations could be addressed afterwards.

IV. ADOPTION OF FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET

Finance Director Douylliez advised that at the September 12th budget meeting, the Commission decided on 2.45 mills and 0.50 for the debt millage. She pointed out that the rollback rate was 2.2009 before moving forward with budget discussions. She said that there are two primary options for the budget. She said that during the September 12th meeting there were comments by Police Department employees regarding pay but that no clear direction was given from the Commission. She advised that the City's department heads met and that page 9 in the budget packet is a brief summary of the things that are targeted to meet and accomplish what the Police Department pointed out at that meeting. She said that our sister city and County partners have starting pay at \$52,000 for police officers, which would put the City below that rate, and we would struggle to recruit. She said that bringing the bottom officers up to \$52,000 would address that issue and that a step increase should be looked at for the remainder of the staff to reward for job performance in addition to the 5% COLA that is in the budget. She advised that one way to meet that goal is to lease two vehicles instead of purchasing them for \$100,000, which would leave \$30,000 in the budget and \$70,000 in savings. In FY 2022 we received an allocation \$143,000 to increase pay, do bonuses, and do mid-year pay adjustments, which left \$45,000 in Reserves. Bringing that \$45,000 into FY 2023 and making other adjustments such as deferring the \$5,000

leaf and litter vacuum to a future year, adjusting the Building Department's revenue to cover its share of increases at \$8,000, and other small changes to cover the remaining \$8,100. She said that those adjustments of \$136,329 would accomplish meeting the request of the Police Department to bring the lowest paid officers up to the starting pay with our sister city and County and also reward the rest of the staff with a step plan of 2.5% to 3%. She said that those adjustments could be easily made and that she has ordinances that would cover making budget adjustments if that is what the Commission decides. She advised that this is at the will of the Commission to either stay with what was presented on September 12th or make this budget change.

Mayor Samora thanked Finance Director Douylliez for giving the Commission some options to address the feedback from the last meeting.

Commissioner Sweeny asked if the \$70,000 savings for the leasing of the vehicles was just for one year. Finance Director Douylliez advised that it is for one year and that GASB (Government Accounting Standards Board) requires us to put \$100,000 to purchase it and if we lease it, we have to match that full \$100,000 in revenue as debt proceeds and record the actual expense of \$30,000 for a one-year expense. Commissioner Sweeny said that it would be \$30,000 for one year and we would have \$30,000 the following year. Finance Director Douylliez said yes, for several more years. Mayor Samora asked what the term of the lease is. Finance Director Douylliez said that they are five year leases. Mayor Samora asked if the \$70,000 would be spread over the following four years. Finance Director Douylliez said that it is a one time adjustment for this year only. Commissioner Sweeny asked if the City would end up paying \$50,000 instead of \$100,000. Finance Director Douylliez advised that there would be interest to pay and that the first year has closing fees, etc., but that it could go down. She said that she does not have those numbers because we are not purchasing until after the budget is approved. Mayor Samora said that basically the expense gets spread over four years. Finance Director Douylliez said yes, and that the City has leased over the past three years off-and-on. Commissioner Sweeny asked if the City leases other police vehicles. Finance Director Douylliez said that the City has been leasing for about three years and was going to try to get away from doing it this year, but it is one area that we can find a large amount of savings.

Mayor Samora asked if there were any further questions. He said that there would be some expenses that would carry forward with the leases. He said that he does not like that the City is using the one-time ARPA Funds and that we would have to find that money again next year. Finance Director Douylliez advised that that money was already allocated in the FY 2022 budget, and it would carry over and roll back into ARPA, which would go towards funding it this year but that ultimately these pay raises would need to be funded forever.

Commissioner Sweeny said that she appreciates staff bringing this proposal, but that she has concerns for using a one-time fix to fund salary increases. She said that this year the City is fortunate to have available revenue because of the increase in home values but that it probably would not increase 11% next year. She said that she has concerns for next year's budget based on home values not increasing as much and the City not having as much revenue. Mayor Samora agreed.

Commissioner England said that having our starting salary less than the sister city and the County puts us at a disadvantage and that the residents really care for the Police Department. She said that the other option is the millage rate that could be used, but that was already reduced from 2.50 to 2.45.

Mayor Samora said that it could be covered this year but that he has concerns going forward and that everyone needs to be aware that the salary increases are not going away. He said that at some point they would need to be covered from the millage or the General Fund. He advised that he had a brief conversation with the Sheriff who said that there is something that happened

statewide and minimum salaries for police departments went up in certain counties, which caught him by surprise, and he had to ask for more money to raise the minimum salaries.

Commissioner Sweeny asked how much of the \$136,000 would be going towards raising the starting pay for the Police Department. Finance Director Douylliez advised that approximately \$9,000 per police officer and she believed there were seven officers. Commissioner Sweeny said that \$63,000 is just to raise the minimum. Finance Director Douylliez said yes plus the additional Florida Retirement System (FRS), payroll taxes, etc. that would be compounded.

Commissioner George asked what it would reflect for the other positions because the Commission had already decided to do a 5% raise and now this would be in addition, and she asked what it would equate to. Finance Director Douylliez advised that there is an overall increase of 5% in the original budget and that based on the position it could be between a 2.5% to 3% raise for the step plan. Commissioner George asked for clarification of the starting salary of \$52,000 vs \$54,600. Finance Director Douylliez advised that it is because the officers work 84-hours every two weeks. She said that it is \$52,000 per year/\$25 per hour and that their shift work includes the extra four hours per pay period, which totals approximately \$56,000. Commissioner George asked if it was comparable. Finance Director Douylliez said yes, it is supposed to be \$25 per hour, which is what this is based on, and that the City has 84-hour shift work, and she believed that both the sister city and the County are 80-hours every two weeks. Commissioner George said that is important information because it is not quite the same. Finance Director Douylliez said that is why she asked for their hourly rate because if the Chief decides to go back to 80-hours that it would still be comparable. Commissioner George said that at least we are providing greater opportunity with a few extra hours a year.

Commissioner Sweeny said that she believed that at the last meeting she made comments of providing flexibility within that 5% and not an additional increase or to allocate some money for merit to reward the high performers. She said that this is across the board and does not address merit. Finance Director Douylliez said correct, but that the step program is basically for merit. She said that a low performer may not receive a full step plan. Commissioner Sweeny asked if that was calculated into this. Finance Director Douylliez said that it is calculated at 100% because she does not have access to the individual managers to say how many of their staff would get 25%, etc. She advised that the managers could speak for their individual departments because they are the ones that assisted with developing this as an option.

Mayor Samora said that he would like to know if Chief Carswell feels like this addresses the concerns of his department. Chief Carswell said that he believed that it does address the starting pay, which has been an issue. He said that one of the officers spoke about it last month and that this amount of money is important to them and would help a lot. He said that the Finance Director has worked really hard to find a solution and that it should not just be about the Police Department and that all employees should be included.

Mayor Samora asked Director Tredik for his comments. Public Works Director Tredik said that the way the budget is proposed would help to maintain a full department and that it has been a challenging year even at \$15 per hour. He would hate to go back to having three vacancies in Public Works and that this storm coming is a perfect example of why we need to stay at full staff. He said that there are no scheduled vacations this week to be able to be on standby after the storm. He said that he recommends the proposed budget and if not, that the City would be struggling to keep staff again. City Manager Royle advised that he agreed with both the Finance Director and the Public Works Director.

IT Manager Anthony Johns said that this is not the first time that the Commission has heard him say that he is having a hard time retaining staff. He said that he has been notified by IT Specialist Nelson that he may not stay because of the pay and that Mr. Adams has left the IT Department.

He advised that he is trying to hire new employees, but that the job is posted at around \$41,000 and that people want upwards of \$90,000 a year, or the applicants are unqualified. He said that it is not just a Police Department issue because all departments are having the same issue, and this is a positive solution, which is a minimal amount to resolve it.

Commissioner England asked to go over the step increase again. She said that she understands that the budget would be adjusted for FY 2023 immediately and that she needs more detail about the step increase. Finance Director Douylliez advised that this proposed change would be a step increase for all other positions between 2.5% and 3% depending on the position. She said that all general positions for City employees are based on twenty steps with a beginning range and an ending range, which is divided by twenty and that each step goes up proportionately 2.5% to 3%. She said that the Police Department has fifteen steps with their beginning and ending ranges divided by fifteen. She said that theoretically each employee should increase by one step each year based on their number of years with the City and their performance. She advised that the current budget does not include any step consideration, it includes a 5% COLA but at this time COLA is over 9%. She said that this is just raising the starting pay to be competitive in the marketplace and it does not take into account employee performance. She said that the amounts provided are the total amounts for everyone to receive their full step and for the lowest paid officers to go to \$52,000 per year/\$25 per hour.

Mayor Samora said that the step increase is in the budget for everyone to receive at manager's discretion and he asked when those adjustments would be made. Finance Director Douylliez advised that for those employees receiving a step increase that it would be based on their prior year's performance and would go into effect October 1st, 2022. She said that if further details are needed that the budget could be approved, and the additional information could be obtained and implemented later in the year. She said that she has hesitation about doing a pay study because those studies are typically a year or two behind and would not provide a true picture. She said that she is looking at several months before she could even start asking for the information, which could be a mid-year preparation to look at.

Commissioner George asked if the adjustment to add an additional payout on pages 10 and 11 included the 2.5% to 3% step. Finance Director Douylliez advised that it is adjusting it with the added step level. She said for example, the Police Department has several vacancies with \$25 per hour in the right column and \$54,600 annually with the changes of the full step or the adjustment for the Police Department. Commissioner George asked if the managers' merit decisions have already been made. Finance Director Douylliez advised that this is fully loaded with everyone and that she does not receive the performance reviews. If the Commission agrees to increase the budget to accommodate this, then each manager would be looking at their individual employees and get back to her before the first payroll of FY 2023 to determine who would receive a full step and who would receive a portion.

Commissioner George asked if this would actually be in the budget. Finance Director Douylliez advised that the detail would not be in the budget but that each department's dollar amounts are in the budget. She said for example if \$200,000 was in the Public Works Department, then Director Tredik would have that amount to use for his rewards to his employees. Commissioner George asked if any of the figures put us outside of the ranges that were established from the last pay study. Finance Director Douylliez said no and that most of the employees are below the mid-range. Commissioner George said that there were representations made to the Commission regarding the State doing wage increases to five percent and she asked if it relates to the step. Finance Director Douylliez said that she is not sure how the State based the increases but that she obtained the information that they are going with a 5% increase and that she did not believe that they shared whether it was COLA or a step/merit-based increase. She advised that it was the same with the FGFOA members that shared the information for what they are putting in their budgets.

Commissioner Sweeny asked if there was any idea how much of an overall increase for the year that would give coupled with the mid-year adjustment. She said that those who were brought up to \$15 per hour would now be receiving at least another 7% increase that might put them around a 14% increase in one year. Finance Director Douylliez said yes. She said that the original budget had a page that showed from the beginning of FY 2022 to the beginning of FY 2023 with the 5% included and Service Worker I going up to \$15 per hour, then receiving a 5% increase would take them to \$15.75, which is a 13.47% increase from the beginning of FY 2022 to the beginning of FY 2023 and then add another 2.5% or 3%.

Mayor Samora said that from \$15.75 an hour to \$16.06 would be another 30¢ per hour. Director Tredik said that it might not seem like much, but to them it really matters and that they probably were not making enough before they got that raise. He said that with inflation that they are still probably losing 4%. He said that it is difficult to hire and keep people and that they would not stay if they could find a job for 30¢ more an hour.

Mayor Samora said that that is where we will see the largest percentage increase year after year at about 16.5%, which is a lot, but these are unprecedented times. He said that for the years that he has been in business and owned a business that he has never seen it go up like this.

Mayor Samora opened Public Comment.

Nick Binder, 232 Big Magnolia Court, St. Augustine Beach, FL, looking at the budget he thinks some money is coming from the ARPA funds to buy vehicles; there is \$300,000 uncommitted from ARPA; there are some items adopted by the Commission but not approved; next month's meeting is moving to purchase two garbage trucks; there is money to use over the next year to take care of needs; when on the New Jersey School Board the interest rates were 12%, employees were hurting, and it had to be built into the budget; keep in mind ARPA is supposed to be used for more than salary increases; the City needs talented employees; next month's agenda does not have Ocean Hammock Park walkway and he asked for assurance that it would not be voted on next Monday. Mayor Samora advised that the Commission would stay on the budget topic and would address the Ocean Hammock concern at the end of the meeting.

Mayor Samora closed Public Comments.

Mayor Samora said that the Finance Director did a good job of presenting something that addressed the concerns of staff and the others that have spoken to the Commission. He said that he thinks that it is probably the right thing but that it is difficult in a tough budget year and that he is more worried about next year's budget than this year's budget. He asked for the Commissioners and staff to remember this going forward because if we do this now then we might be cutting things next year. He said that he agreed with Mr. Binder that the City needs talented employees, and that the City has talented employees and that he hopes to attract more.

Vice Mayor Rumrell said that he echoed the Mayor and that he is okay with it for this year but that there might be projects that do not happen next year. He said that he is a big proponent of retaining employees because we would spend more to hire new people.

Commissioner England said that she remembers many years in the budget where the Commission held overall personnel increases to 3% and that wages were pretty stagnant for a long time. She said that this is an unusual year and that she supports the changes for now because wages may stabilize again.

Commissioner George said that she does not like that it is coming up at the last minute of the final budget meeting. She said that she also has a problem with the fact that this arose in conversation from the last meeting from one specific issue from one specific department. She also has an issue with the fact that we have already created a policy decision regarding 5% that was based on certain data and those data benchmarks are now changing and she does not feel like she has

enough information to be comfortable as a fiduciary. She said that she supports all the staff, and she wants to give the department heads what they need but that as fiduciaries there are certain procedures that need to be followed. She said that we are all guessing on numbers tonight and she is not comfortable voting in favor of it. She said that she needs to know that it is funds that would be granted some discretion by the department heads and that the attachments do not show that. She said that the agenda book is so scant with very little to give confidence on the issues. She said that she did not understand why the money was not allocated by the department heads in prior budget drafts if this is money that has been needed. She said that the Commission needs to know in the beginning of the process how much each department needs to be earmarked for step increases on top of the across-the-board adjustments, which is the only way the Commission can be sure it is doing its fiduciary responsibility by keeping the categories consistent with the comparisons that are used to make the decisions. She wants to support the sentiment of it, but she does not feel ethically in a position to vote in favor of it tonight.

Mayor Samora said that those are fair concerns and that he does not like having it come up at the last minute either. He said that in the individual meeting he was disappointed to not see any merit-based program and instead have a 5% COLA across the board. He said that he did not like the fact that the managers did not have the money available to reward the employees that deserved it. He would have liked to have that information available in the packets and that those are notes to take forward into next year. Commissioner England said that we talked about doing a mid-year look at salaries and that she understands their concerns about it being at the last minute.

Commissioner Sweeny said that she shares many of Commissioner George's sentiments and concerns and that she has been pretty vocal about her concerns for the implications that this may have for the future year's budgets and the position that it puts the Commission in. She said that she does not want her comments to be misconstrued that she does not support staff or the officers, because she has the utmost respect for what they do every day. She said that the City needs to be paying more, but she has concerns with how this proposal came about and she wished it would have been presented sooner. She said that the Commission has been talking about the 5% for a while and she was expecting to see a proposal giving flexibility within that 5%, which she would have been more comfortable with. She said that she understands that inflation and the economy are difficult right now and she wants to be able to attract and retain the best employees, but she does not want the City to be in the position next year to not be able to give any salary increases. She would rather work toward a goal incrementally or maybe give it all this year with the understanding that there is not going to be much next year. She does not want to set unrealistic expectations about how much we can do in one year. She said that she wants to support it and provide the resources for the City, but she does not know that we can do it all at once.

Mayor Samora said that they have two separate decisions tonight and they have to address the millage first and after that choose to either adopt this version or the previous version of the budget. He said that does not allow much time to think about it but there is another path forward, that they could either adopt the budget as presented this time or move forward with the previous budget and make adjustments through ordinances after FY 2023 is started.

Commissioner George said that she does not understand why there needs to be much of a deviation such as a leased vehicle vs. a purchased vehicle to free up money for the Police Department to fund what they need. She asked if staff could come to the Commission with retention and hiring issues. Finance Director Douylliez said yes and that the Commission can go forward with the budget that was approved on September 12th or we can work on making adjustments in the future and present more data, but that she probably would not be able to get the data for salary ranges until mid-year. She said that staff could come back to the Commission

with budget resolutions at that point. Commissioner George asked if the \$70,000 freed up from the two police vehicles would be redistributed among other departments to do an across-the-board adjustment. Finance Director Douylliez advised yes and that is where the budget resolution would come in to adjust all the departments that it would affect. She said that the money that is allocated from ARPA that was not used for the mid-year salary adjustment would just roll back into ARPA with a budget resolution to pull it back into the FY 2023 budget whenever the Commission decides to make that change. She said that the only reason she did this was because there was no clear consensus from the Commission and that she wanted to provide options to look at. She said that it seems very hasty but that it was a lot of work to change all the line items to cover all the expenses that are out there.

Mayor Samora said that he can see that it was a lot of work and that the proposed change to the Police Department's vehicles to a lease would free up \$70,000 and the changes to Police Department's salaries would account for approximately \$63,000, which is a fairly close offset. He said that the ARPA money would either be sitting in Reserves or elsewhere to put towards this. Finance Director Douylliez advised that she had discussed with the City Manager the need to have several workshops for the budget going forward. She said that she knows that it is hard to get everyone together for a workshop, but overall it would benefit everyone as the budget is being developed such as upcoming projects and whether they would be able to be funded. Mayor Samora said that as these budgets get more difficult that the Commission would need to do a better job giving clear direction whether it be through a workshop or otherwise.

Mayor Samora said that he does not hear a clear consensus, but the Commission does have to move forward.

Commissioner England questioned why the step increase was included in the adjustment for the Police Department to have a more competitive starting salary. She said that because of the last-minute change, the lack of information, and the approved 5% increase overall for the budget, that she believed it should be enough of an increase for FY 2023 right now. She suggested to allow the Finance Director time to gather more information and then look at the starting salaries again mid-year. She said that Commissioner George suggested whether it could be done internally within the Police Department's budget for starting salaries. Mayor Samora asked Chief Carswell for his comments. Chief Carswell said that a lot of this is about retention and that starting salaries are critical to fill the vacancies. He said that retention is the main thing and the departments have discussed this in individual meetings and it has been a concern for a while. He said that retention is also a problem for the IT Department and Public Works. Director Tredik said that retention is still a problem a year down the road after an employee has been trained when they do not get a step increase, they only get a COLA increase. He said that then the salary base changes and a new hire with no experience is making the same as the employee with experience and that is why the step increase is important to retention. He said that a merit increase would reward them for working hard and becoming a valuable employee and he recommended not removing the step increase.

Commissioner Sweeny asked what the starting salaries are for St. Johns County and the City of St. Augustine's Public Works Department. Director Tredik advised that he did not have that information with him, but that the City used to be roughly the same pay. He said that when the City was paying \$13.80 that he could not find any new hires, and at \$15 he is starting to see a little more, but he is still struggling with retention and this additional money would help.

Commissioner George asked if the City Manager's office was fully staffed. City Manager Royle advised that he has a full staff. Commissioner George asked if any employees have left the City Manager's Department. City Manager Royle said no. Commissioner George asked the same of Building Official Law's Departments. Building Official Law said that a year ago he put out a position

for a Building Inspector because he was cited on his three-year audit for too much workload. He advised that he had to pull the ad because the City was not paying enough to compete and that recently the position has been reposted, but that he has not received any applications. He said that some of his jobs require certain certifications that only the State can issue. He said that next week he would be proposing that Code Enforcement be funded through transient rental inspection fees, which would shore up that department at zero cost. He said that the Building Department is actively trying to hire and that he would be posting jobs on web pages that specialize in his industry. He said that today is a perfect example because the Building Department lost their air-conditioner, which the Building Department will fund for roughly \$20,000 because he cannot wait for the City to allocate the money or ask his staff to work in mid-80 degree temperatures. He advised that Ms. Miller will be preparing for retirement July 1, 2024, which is a significant loss to the City. He advised that the City would need to spend \$80,000 to be able to hire a qualified American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) planner, which would not include things such as taxes, Florida Retirement System (FRS), insurance, etc.

Commissioner England asked what the total percentage of personnel increases are from FY 2022 to FY 2023. Finance Director Douylliez advised that she did not have that number. Commissioner England said that is what the City would be looking at for a starting point next year, which would affect the millage. Commissioner Sweeny said the average would probably be around \$10 since the high end is \$16. Commissioner England said that it would be the starting point for the millage consideration next year. Mayor Samora said that the \$136,000 represents the changes from the last budget to this budget and that it does not change the overall amount just where the money is coming from, which would need to be made up next year.

Commissioner George said that it seems like there is a greater need in certain positions and she would prefer that the money be put where it is needed rather than across the board. She said that she is relieved that it does not impact the millage and that the Commission could move things around as proposed. She advised that she was not comfortable with making such a radical shift in the policy decision that was already made and that she would be more comfortable if there were more detail and directed where it is needed. She said that an increase across the board would just burden the City's shoulders forever. She said that maybe next year the City would only increase some positions.

Mayor Samora asked if this proposed budget allows the managers to have the flexibility to adjust the step increases for each position. Finance Director Douylliez advised that the managers have that flexibility, but that she did not know if they would exercise it or not. She said that it would be challenging for the departments that have a full staff of twenty-four employees. She said that overall, the managers would be looking at performance and that it is her opinion that those employees that are on probation should not be entitled to a step increase. Vice Mayor Rumrell said that typically in the private sector the lowest get paid first and the top get paid last and that may be something that the City needs to look at. Finance Director Douylliez pointed out that there are a lot of openings out there for talent in upper level positions that are paying much more and that some City management positions are not compensated at a level that they would be in the private sector. She said that it is disconcerting to tell a manager that he/she has done a good job but that they are not entitled to a step increase. She said that when the prior City Clerk left, the City had trouble finding someone because they wanted substantially higher salaries and that the City was fortunate that former Deputy City Clerk Fitzgerald accepted the position for less money and with more responsibility. She said that managers should have the flexibility and that managers should also be able benefit from a pay increase based on merit.

Commissioner England said that the way the personnel budget is presented is different than what she is used to in the commercial industry, such as employees at the top of their salary range would have less of an increase. She said that the Commission is in a bad position if almost all the

employees are below mid-point and there is a lot of catching up to do. She said that she does not like the additional step increase at the last minute across the board but if they are all below mid-range then it would need to be considered. Mayor Samora agreed, and he asked to clarify how the ranges were determined. Finance Director Douylliez advised that the ranges were set in March of 2021. She said to perform a salary study annually is a significant outlay and is not normally done. She advised that she did not expect inflation to hit the way it did, and she suggested to do something to review the pay ranges mid-year with a possible workshop. She agreed that this information was presented quickly, but given the time frame that it was brought up and then trying to develop something to present back to the Commission was a short period of time to gather information.

Commissioner George said that a thorough agenda item would have been great to be able to see the data of the ranges, the pay study, etc. to be able to do research in advance of the discussion. She said that inflation is around 8% to 9% and that the City has accounted for more than that in most of the positions already and that if more is needed than the Commission needs to do that and determine how and with what data.

Mayor Samora said that this has been a robust discussion and the Commission has a fiduciary responsibility and a City to run. He said that he has heard from staff, managers, and constituents, and that the need is there whether we like how the numbers came to us or not. He said that this is very difficult for the Commission, and we are trying to get all the data that we can to make a good financial decision for everyone.

Mayor Samora moved on to Item IV.A.

- A. Ordinance 22-09, Final Reading, to Adopt Operating and Debt Millage (Presenter: Patricia Douylliez, Finance Director)

Motion: To approve Ordinance 22-09 to set the millage rate of 2.45 and a debt millage rate of 0.50. **Moved by** Mayor Samora, **Seconded by** Commissioner George.

Mayor Samora asked the City Attorney to read the full ordinance. City Attorney McCrea read Ordinance 22-09 in full. Mayor Samora asked for a roll call vote.

Commissioner George	Yes
Vice Mayor Rumrell	Yes
Mayor Samora	Yes
Commissioner Sweeny	Yes
Commissioner England	Yes

Motion passed unanimously at 6:12 p.m.

Mayor Samora moved on to Item IV.B.

- B. Ordinance 22-10, Final Reading, to Adopt FY 2023 Budget (Presenter: Patricia Douylliez, Finance Director)

Finance Director Douylliez advised that she has an amended Ordinance 22-12, if the Commission decides to move forward with the pay changes, otherwise the original ordinance would be read as adopted on September 12th. Commissioner Sweeny asked why the original amount would change. Finance Director Douylliez advised because we have increased the amount in the budget by bringing in the amount for not purchasing the vehicles and it has to be funded at 100% and \$100,000 is the true expense for those vehicles and we would bring in the amount of money for ARPA to fund the remainder of it, which changes the total of the budget. Commissioner George asked what that dollar amount would be. Finance Director Douylliez said that the amount with

the pay changes would be \$14,785,911.09 and the original amount was \$14,632,681.79. Commissioner George said that she is not following why that adjustment happened. Commissioner England said that the lower figure has the full \$100,000 to purchase two vehicles. Finance Director Douylliez said that GASB requires that a leased debt has to be funded at 100%. Commissioner George said that it makes sense now. Commissioner Sweeny said that she would expect that number to be \$100,000, plus the ARPA \$45,362, and she does not understand why the rest that is being allocated is included and that she calculated \$153,000 difference between the two numbers. Finance Director Douylliez said that there was an \$84,000 adjustment at the last meeting to reduce the millage. She said that she does not have the numbers in front of her but that she could provide them and that these are the dollar amounts that the budget totals up to. She said that the largest amount is the \$100,000 debt service and the amount being brought in from ARPA and we also had to increase the revenue \$8,000 for the Building Department to cover the expenses because the General Fund does not cover it. Commissioner Sweeny asked where that money comes from. Finance Director Douylliez said that it would come from Building Department Reserves specifically allocated for that Department and that the General Fund cannot touch those funds. Mayor Samora recapped: \$100,000 from the two vehicle leases, \$45,000 from ARPA, and \$7,000 from the Building Department, which totals \$153,000 and that the other \$8,000 was just moved around within the budget. Finance Director Douylliez said yes.

Motion: To approve Ordinance 22-10 for a total budget of \$14,785,911.09. **Moved by** Vice Mayor Rumrell, **Seconded by** Mayor Samora.

Mayor Samora asked for any further discussion.

Commissioner England said that the personnel changes need more information. She said that she could support the starting salary increase for Police Officers, and maybe a step increase for all employees below mid-point, but not across the board.

Commissioner Sweeny asked if there were any employees above the mid-point. Finance Director Douylliez said she believed there were seven employees above mid-point. Commissioner Sweeny said that she is torn and does not like it at all but that she wants to support the employees. She said that she has concerns for where this puts the City down the road.

Commissioner George advised that the Commission could message that it wants to keep working on it whether it gets adopted or not. She said that the message that the Commission is giving is to plan the agendas to flush this out more.

Mayor Samora asked the City Attorney to read the ordinance in full. City Attorney McCrea read Ordinance 22-10 in full. Mayor Samora asked for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Sweeny	No
Commissioner England	No
Commissioner George	No
Vice Mayor Rumrell	Yes
Mayor Samora	Yes

Motion fails 3-2.

Motion: To approve Ordinance 22-10 for a total budget of \$14,632,681.79. **Moved by** Commissioner George, **Seconded by** Commissioner England.

Mayor Samora asked the City Attorney to read the ordinance in full. City Attorney McCrea read Ordinance 22-10 in full. Mayor Samora asked for a roll call vote.

Mayor Samora	Yes
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Commissioner Sweeny	Yes
Commissioner England	Yes
Commissioner George	Yes
Vice Mayor Rumrell	Yes

Motion passed unanimously at 6:22 p.m.

Mayor Samora advised that this was an extremely difficult budget and that the Commission is not done with it. He said that the Commission has clearly instructed staff that this needs to be brought back and to move in a direction to make some adjustments no later than mid-year. He asked for the managers to talk to their staff.

City Attorney McCrea cautioned the Commission about discussing items that are not on the agenda because there was no public notice done and that it could be addressed in Public Comments during the next meeting. Mayor Samora asked if he could do a storm update. City Attorney McCrea said the storm update was fine but that there was another item brought up that was to be discussed at the end and he advised that it should not be done. Mayor Samora said that it was in relation to the Public Comment question. City Attorney McCrea said yes. Commissioner George advised that any Commissioner is free to speak to a citizen that wants to talk outside of the formal setting. City Attorney McCrea said yes that there is no public notice on it and that it is not what this meeting was for.

Mayor Samora moved on to Item V. and he asked the City Manager for his report.

V. Addition: DISCUSSION OF PREPARATIONS FOR HURRICANE IAN

City Manager Royle advised that the Public Works Director and his staff are the major players to prepare the City and they began their work last week. He said that they prepared by doing such things as taking down the covers at splash park, removing trash cans, topping off oil tanks and generators, etc. He said that there will be a staff meeting tomorrow and that the City's Public Information Officer, Ms. Melinda Conlon, is staying in touch with her County contacts so that we have a consistent message going forward to the public. The Public Works Director restricted vacations this week, attended an EOC (Emergency Operations Center) meeting this afternoon, and that the storm is still a question mark depending on whether it wobbles to the east or the west. He said that the general consensus is that it would be a major rain event and that the City's retention pond new pumps are fully operational and are pumping down now so the City's drainage system can absorb more water. He said that if the City gets ten to fifteen inches of rain in twenty-four hours that there is no stormwater management system that would be able to prevent flooding in the City. He advised that the tide would also be coming in from the intercoastal and the stormwater from the City would meet in the pond, which would probably fill up to its banks. He said that from the non-law enforcement side, we are as prepared as we can be and that there are always things that may need to be adjusted as the storm proceeds. He said that the Public Works staff is going around picking up debris from the sides of the roads and would continue normal trash pick up for as long as they can. He said that the hurricane force winds are not forecasted to reach us but that the tropic storm force winds could cause the bridges to be closed. He said that he would not want employees coming back to the City if there is a bridge closure, but if the winds die down, we would want them to return as soon as they can so that the Public Works Department could remove the debris from the streets and take care of public property damages. He said that Building Official Law would be working on private property damage assessment.

Chief Carswell advised that the EOC meeting today left him with uncertainty, because it could change tonight or tomorrow and that the Police Department is preparing for the worst possible

outcome. He said that the Police Department is monitoring the path everyday and attending the EOC meetings and have pumped up the patrol schedule from Wednesday through Saturday and would probably have double the amount of people working. He said that we are expecting flooding and that he would need to have enough officers out there to close any roads if necessary. He advised that if there were a loss of power for the stop lights that he would want to have enough officers to cover those intersections and for things to run as normal as possible. He said that St. Johns County Beach Services may decide to close the pier and that he would find out more tomorrow. He said that they would be locking the beach gates on Wednesday because the tide is supposed to be high and unsafe. He advised that in-house they secured the ammo and weapons, so that the tropic storm would not ruin them, that volunteers and the Public Information Officer (PIO) are reaching out to the elderly on the list to make sure they are ok, pushing information out on social media, and keeping Ms. Conlon informed with the information that the Police Department receives from the County so that we all have the same message to the residents. Mayor Samora agreed to keep the message consistent especially with the uncertainty of the storm. Chief Carswell advised that there should be another meeting tomorrow morning at the EOC.

Commissioner Sweeny asked if sand has been put at the beach entrances. Director Tredik said that it has been done in the past for Atlantic approaching storms and that he does not see that level of storm surge but that he would keep an eye on it. Chief Carswell said that they were predicting a one to three foot storm surge.

Vice Mayor Rumrell advised that the area just received a storm surge watch and a tropical storm watch. He said that people can call 850-900-3446 and enter their zip code to hear the latest on Hurricane Ian or email ian.weatherstem.com and enter your zip code for email updates as they become available. Mayor Samora asked Ms. Conlon to make sure to put that information out as well. Ms. Conlon advised that it is already out.

Mayor Samora asked if there were any planned closures for the City. City Manager Royle advised not at this point and that it is being monitored day-by-day. Mayor Samora asked if trash collection was on schedule. Director Tredik advised that it is on schedule but that he was not certain about Thursday and Friday and would take it day-by-day. Mayor Samora asked if updates to the schedules would be on the City's website. Director Tredik said yes.

City Clerk Fitzgerald advised that the City Manager's office has been receiving calls since very early this morning from concerned residents and that the City is trying to keep on top of everything that we hear. She said that one of the biggest concerns was about sandbags, which would be available starting tomorrow however, they would not be at Ron Parker Park. She advised that the closest location to the City is at Windswept Acres Park south of the City on A1A South near the Catholic church or the Solomon Calhoun Center south of King Street.

Finance Director Douylliez advised that she is already tracking hours that are being allocated to the storm should FEMA interact with us and then we would have enough to submit for reimbursement.

Vice Mayor Rumrell advised that St. Johns County Commission Chair Henry Dean went to sign the emergency order tonight.

City Manager Royle said that Ocean Walk subdivision has a pump station there so the City would be able to pump the water into the Mickler ditch and there are other flooding areas that would be closely monitored. He said that the City would eventually need to have a long-range plan in the vicinity of Ocean Trace Road because there is a lot of private property and ponds, the Public Works Director made a suggestion for a possible approach and would bring that back to the Commission in the future.

Mayor Samora thanked everyone for the updates and said that he looked forward to the continued updates.

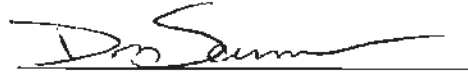
Mayor Samora moved on to Item VI.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Samora asked for a motion to adjourn.

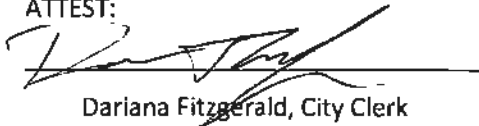
Motion: to adjourn. **Moved by** Commissioner George, **Seconded by** Commissioner Sweeny. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Samora adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Samora", written over a horizontal line.

Donald Samora, Mayor

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dariana Fitzgerald", written over a horizontal line.

Dariana Fitzgerald, City Clerk