



Town of Orchid

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Orchid Island Beach Club, 1 Beachside Drive, Orchid, FL 32963

Town Council Meeting Minutes Special Meeting

1. Call to Order

Mayor Gibbons called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Present:

Town Council

Mayor Robert Gibbons
Vice Mayor Paul Knapp
Councilmember Mary Jane Benedetto
Councilmember John Heanue
Councilmember James Raphalian

Town Staff

Cherry Stowe, Town Manager & Interim Town Clerk
D. Johnathan Rhodeback, Town Attorney

3. Preliminary matters; Agenda additions, deletions or modifications

There were none.

4. Public Participation

There was none.

5. Town Council Business

A. Consideration of applications for vacant Town Clerk position

The Town Manager reported on the applications for the open position of Town Clerk the Town had received and that all of these had been provided to each Councilmember. She advised on the procedures she and Councilmember Benedetto had established for the evaluation of the candidates and pronounced that two candidates had risen to the top. She provided a detailed overview of each of these, including information obtained from references.

Councilmember Benedetto shared she was comfortable that either candidate, though different in many ways, would be well suited to serving Orchid as Town Clerk. She said she and the Town Manager had struggled to narrow down the choice to a single recommendation and were eager for Town Council input at this stage of the selection.



Upon further discussion, it was determined that the Town should move forward with Mrs. Jane Garcia, who would come to the Town with experience having served as a Town Clerk previously.

Mayor Gibbons made a motion to offer the position of Town Clerk to Mrs. Jane Garcia conditioned on the satisfactory results of a background check approved by the Mayor, with a starting salary of \$60,000, which is to be reviewed at the end of the probationary period. Councilmember Heanue seconded the motion. All Councilmembers were in favor.

B. Town Hall lease agreement start date at Orchid Professional Centre at 9301 Highway A1A

The Town Manager stated that she and Councilmember Benedetto conducted a walk-thru of the leased space at the Orchid Professional Centre the day prior to the meeting with the landlord to verify the build-out is substantially complete. She advised that a small list of fixes had been identified during that walk-thru, but that none regarded significant concerns. She anticipated that most would be addressed by March 1 and was confident the landlord would attend to any outstanding matters not fully addressed by then as soon as possible. Councilmember Benedetto agreed and emphasized how professionally the build-out had been managed by the landlord, with excellent communication throughout.

The Town Manager proposed that the build-out be deemed substantially complete, in accordance with the lease agreement, as of March 1. She pointed out that this would trigger lease payments as well as the requirement to pay the Town's contribution to the build-out. She acknowledged that this was a month earlier than had been recently estimated by the landlord, but this was expected to allow for a smoother transition into the space, whereby the new Town Hall can be well enough furnished to move the equipment, and with it the day-to-day administration, without having to pay for off-site storage in the interim.

Councilmember Benedetto made a motion to accept the build-out as substantially complete as of March 1, 2024, pursuant to the lease agreement and as verified by the Town Manager on that date, thereby triggering the start of associated lease payments. Vice-Mayor Knapp seconded the motion. All Councilmembers were in favor.

The Town Manager next advised on the agreement the Town Attorney had been working on with the selected real estate agent for the sale of the current Town Hall space and received the Town Council's assistance in filling in the blanks. Mayor Gibbons asked Councilmember Benedetto to be the main contact for the Town Manager for the day-to-day questions and decisions that may arise during the selling process.

6. Councilmember Matters of Interest and Committee Reports

In follow up to a discussion at the last meeting, Councilmember Benedetto gave an update on the presentation for the Metropolitan Planning Agency (MPO) by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding alternative solutions to congestion at the intersection of Route 510 and U.S. Highway 1. She highlighted particularly FDOT's encouragement of public attendance at the forthcoming workshops and for the public to express its input to FDOT. She mentioned that FDOT and MPO representatives acknowledged receipt of the Town's letter



expressing support specifically for the alternative that provides for a partial flyover at the intersection.

Mayor Gibbons shared that at the Treasure Coast Regional League of Cities he had learned about legal action being undertaken by several Florida municipalities regarding the state legislation passed in 2023 requiring all local elected officials to complete a Form 6 Financial Disclosure, in lieu of the less detailed Form 1. He intended to obtain more information for the Town Council to be able to consider joining the lawsuit against the state.

Mayor Gibbons next brought up the subject of beach and dune erosion and the mounting interest in the community, including local leadership, in the exploration of alternatives to repeated sand placement. Councilmember Benedetto echoed his findings. The Town Manager advised on the progress of scheduling a workshop on this subject with various experts to be present.

7. Town Staff Reports

There were none.

8. Confirmation of the Next Meeting Date and Adjournment

The Mayor reminded everyone that the next Town Council meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at 9 a.m. at the Orchid Island Beach Club.

***Mayor Gibbons moved to adjourn the meeting.
Councilmember Benedetto seconded the motion.
All Councilmembers were in favor.***

The meeting was adjourned at 1:21 a.m.

These minutes were approved by the Town Council at the regular meeting of March 6, 2024, as certified by Cherry Stowe, Interim Town Clerk.

