

MINUTES
City of Cocoa
City Council Workshop

June 1, 2021

A City Council Workshop was held on Tuesday, June 1, 2021, in Cocoa City Hall, in City Council Chambers, located at 65 Stone Street, in Cocoa, Florida, 32922, as publicly noticed.

I. Opening Matters:

Mayor Blake called the Workshop to order at 4:08 pm.

Deputy Mayor Goins provided the invocation and Councilmember Dyal led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The City Clerk took the roll.

PRESENT:	Michael C. Blake	Mayor
	James Goins	Deputy Mayor
	Rip Dyal	Councilmember
	Lavander Hearn	Councilmember
	Lorraine Koss	Councilmember
	Anthony Garganese	City Attorney
	Stockton Whitten	City Manager
	Monica Arsenault	Assistant City Clerk

OTHER STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Matthew Fuhrer, Assistant City Manager; Lorne Stinnett, Human Resources Manager; Jack Walsh, Utilities Director; Evander Collier, Chief of Police; Jonathan Lamm, Fire Chief; Bryant Smith, Public Works Director; Charlene Neuterman, Acting Community Services Director; Rebecca Bowman, Finance Director; Lora Howell, Deputy Finance Director; Robert Beach, Chief Technology Officer; and Samantha Senger, Assistant to the City Manager/PR Specialist.

II. Workshop Topics:

1. Budget Development Overview & Presentation

City Manager Whitten explained that ultimately the goal is to bring back a balanced budget proposal within the next 29 days to the City Council and obtain Council's final direction. There is a workshop on June 30th in which a balanced budget proposal will be presented to the Council by the City Manager.

Additionally, City Manager Whitten pointed out that there is a perception that a whole lot of new dollars come into the City's budget each year which is simply not the case. He explained that there are relatively very few new reoccurring dollars, however he feels the best is yet to come as a lot of things are coming onto the property roll over the next two or three fiscal years.

Ms. Bowman gave a presentation¹ regarding the budget. She shared the calendar for upcoming budget workshops for the remainder of the Fiscal Year.

She discussed revenues including increases in recurring revenues and increases in recurring expenses in the FY22 budget.

Mr. Smith spoke briefly regarding a request to increase his staff to add for beautification personnel, janitorial staff, and a few other positions. Ms. Bowman also added that there have been other requests for staff increases from other departments.

City Manager Whitten expressed the importance of building a tax base as the City relies strongly on its utilities as a source of funding.

Mayor Blake asked for further clarification regarding the new position requests from other departments. In response, Ms. Howell clarified that the positions being mentioned tonight are not budgeted yet as staff is seeking Council direction, however these are requests from the General Fund only. Other departments have requested additional personnel as well but the funds would come from other accounts.

Ms. Bowman shared information about balancing the General Fund budget. She mentioned the Ad Valorem revenue budget for FY22 and what is included as well as the shortage in funds.

She mentioned the preliminary General Fund operating budget for FY22 and other budget considerations such as:

- Upcoming labor union negotiations

¹ City Council Workshop – Budget Presentation

- Future state mandates
- Computer system requirements
- Major construction projects
- Solid waste contract expiration
- Competitive salaries
- Covid-19 impacts

Mr. Walsh expressed the difficulty he has had in finding and hiring qualified engineers among a few other positions and this is partly due to competitive salaries. City Manager Whitten added that other departments have struggled in filling positions due to competitive salary issues as well.

Mayor Blake asked how staff is getting by without having these positions filled. In response, Mr. Walsh shared that the work is either split between himself and his Deputy Director or a third party is hired to do the work.

Ms. Bowman discussed FY22 Capital requests by department including requests from the Police Department, Fire Department and Public Works.

Mr. Smith explained how staff determines which vehicles need to be replaced, which vehicles need to undergo maintenance and what vehicles need to be added to the fleet. He noted that various things are taken into consideration when deciding what needs to be requested in the budget.

Ms. Bowman additionally shared requests from the Water/Sewer departments.

She discussed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the two disbursements of funds, one in May 2021 and one in May 2022. Local governments must provide periodic reports to the Treasury providing a detailed accounting of the uses of funds or else funds may be recouped by the Treasury. Furthermore, she explained allocation calculations and the methodology as well as potential deviations in distribution. Cocoa is currently 9th on the list of ARPA fund allocation compared to other cities in the County.

Ms. Bowman addressed ARPA eligible uses of funds and discussed funding projects as well as projects that were deferred. She added that Council has the ability to make a decision now to reallocate \$334,000 dollars to any one of the mentioned deferred projects unless they would rather wait and have staff bring this back at a later time.

Councilmember Koss and Deputy Mayor Goins asked if more time could be allotted before decisions are made so Council can gather more information about the projects being deferred.

Mayor Blake provided a handout² from Delores McLaughlin, who is requesting funds for PAL and ANR. He asked the City Manager what the process is to add this to the budget. In response, City Manager Whitten stated that Council would need to direct him to add this request into the budget.

- * **Consensus by Council to direct the City Manager to build the request of approximately \$88,000 dollars into the budget on behalf of PAL and ANR.**

Ms. Bowman asked for clear direction from Council on whether they would like to wait to make a decision on reallocating \$334,000 dollars or if they would like to do it now.

- * **MOTION by Councilmember Koss; Seconded by Deputy Mayor Goins, to postpone the decision until more information is brought before the Council.**

Ayes: Blake, Goins, Dyal, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

- * **MOTION by Councilmember Dyal; Seconded by Mayor Blake, to take \$95,000 dollars out of the Sustainability budget to assist with funding the PAL program, for discussion.**

Deputy Mayor Goins asked for clarification on what specifically these funds will be used for.

Councilmember Koss also asked for more time for this to be considered as she has submitted several requests that have not been reflected for items that she would like to see come out of this budget. She noted that it would be a possibility that PAL be incorporated into this budget.

Councilmember Hearn explained that he would like to grant Councilmember Koss an opportunity to put forth line items for the sustainability budget for Council's consideration before they make any decisions to take additional money from those funds.

Ayes: Blake, Dyal

Nays: Goins, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION DIED (2-3)

² Letter from Delores McLaughlin on behalf of PAL

Deputy Mayor Goins noted for the record that his vote does not mean that PAL will not receive funds, only that there are members of Council that would like additional information before they make a final decision.

Ms. Bowman shared that staff is seeking approval of a Resolution to authorize the City Manager to execute the Federally Funded Subaward and Grant Agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the Broadmoor Acres and Fiske Boulevard Drainage Improvements Project, and to Approve a Resolution Amending the Budget, BAF # 21- 078-A, allocating funding for the project to the appropriate departments.

Mayor Blake opened the discussion to the public.

Mr. Lawrence Sinclair, 1052 Mitchell St., asked for clarification that this was the FEMA Grant that was obtained through Broadmoor Acres flooding. In response, Mr. Smith explained that this was a combination of the Broadmoor Acres and Fiske Boulevard project. They were combined projects through the Hazard Mitigation program.

Mr. Sinclair asked at what time did the City combine Fiske Boulevard into the Broadmoor Acres drainage project because the City used photos and videos from Broadmoor Acres to obtain funding from FEMA. Mr. Sinclair added that now it seems that everyone is more concerned with Fiske Boulevard than they are with Broadmoor Acres.

In response, Mr. Smith shared that he is not completely sure when the two projects were combined, however he believes it may have been back in 2018 when the application was finalized. The project includes both areas, Broadmoor Acres and Fiske Boulevard, and is roughly a three million dollar project. Furthermore, the City has not received any funding yet as it will be a reimbursement which means the City has to budget for the full amount up front. In order to receive the reimbursement, the City must apply and show that they have met all of FEMA's guidelines as part of the procurement to get the contract.

Mr. Sinclair inquired about the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars that the City budgeted in 2016 when this was passed. In response, Mr. Smith pointed out that he was not working for the City at that time so he's not sure, however he believes that the City carried a contingency amount in case the bid was ever awarded, however the bid was never awarded.

Mr. Sinclair asked if the plans he obtained copies of for the Broadmoor Acres project are still part of the City's plan. This includes concrete aprons, swales, pipes directing the water out of the neighborhood and not behind houses. In response,

Mr. Smith answered affirmatively and explained that the goal, for most of it, is to have front yard swales which will require new aprons there will probably be quite a few mailbox replacements as well. Off of Fiske Boulevard there will be new piping that comes in a certain distance and the goal for the front yard swales is to bring it there. There are a couple of portions that will utilize some of the existing piping and that is where the City is trying to come in for maintenance, however the timing for that is not good at this point because the City is trying to line that up with the project itself.

Chief Lamm added that Mr. Smith is correct and that in 2016 staff had gotten with the previous Public Works Director and looked at HMGP projects that were out there that the City had applied for and at that time the two projects were combined because the City had a better shot at gaining that grant opportunity.

- * **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Deputy Mayor Goins, to approve a Resolution to authorize the City Manager to execute the Federally Funded Subaward and Grant Agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the Broadmoor Acres and Fiske Boulevard Drainage Improvements Project. Approve a Resolution Amending the Budget, BAF # 21- 078-A, allocating funding for the project to the appropriate departments.**

Ayes: Blake, Goins, Dyal, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

Ms. Bowman discussed the City's health insurance and reviewed a summary of the City's benefits. She shared a history of the City's medical rates over the years as well as a summary of renewal options with Option A being a share decrease with employees and Option B being a return to the original formula³.

Ms. Bowman shared staff's recommendations which include the following:

- Share plan decrease with City and Employees for FY22
- Transition to fully-insured plan to take advantage of decrease to premiums.

Risks:

- City will be responsible for run-off FY21 claims on self-insured plan (Estimated \$350-600k)
- Will fund out of health insurance reserves and potential pharmacy rebates.

³ Councilmember Hearn left the room at 5:40pm and returned at 5:43pm

- Any savings on claims reserves that are lower than premiums will be kept by plan.

Mr. Smith provided a brief update on the City's parks. He mentioned the Open Space Plan recommendations and pointed out the approved park improvements. He added that as staff gets deeper into these requests, they will be able to determine what can actually be done based on quotes and costs.

Additionally, Mr. Smith highlighted Council's approved capital improvements which total about \$2.25 million dollars.

Councilmember Hearn asked if he could make a motion to rescind his request for a bathroom at Bracco Pond Park and instead request a bathroom facility at Fern and Prospect Park. He explained that he witnessed parents allowing their children to use the restroom under the playground equipment as there is no bathroom for them to use. He shared that it was sad and disturbing.

Mayor Blake suggested a bathroom at all three parks.

Councilmember Koss pointed out that although she is supportive of a restroom facility at Bracco Pond at some point, it is important to note that there are a few homeless camps in that area and she is just not sure if now is the time to add one at that park.

- * **MOTION by Councilmember Hearn; Seconded by Deputy Mayor Goins, to rescind Councilmember Hearn's original request to install a bathroom at Bracco Park and instead request a bathroom facility at Fern and Prospect Park, with discussion.**

Ayes: Koss, Hearn

Nays: Blake, Goins, Dyal

THE MOTION DIED (2-3)

Mayor Blake opened the discussion to the public.

Aleck Greenwood, 640 Brevard Ave., expressed that although a splash pad at Junny Rios Martinez Park would be great, he feels that maybe this project could be deferred, and that money could be used to build restroom facilities at the parks.

Councilmember Dyal added that Junny Rios park is the only park on SR 524 in Cocoa and feels that this would be a welcomed addition to this park as there are not many pools in this area and it would provide a water activity for the local residents.

Greg Stoll, 2203 Salem Dr., wished to lobby on behalf of the Brevard Museum. He is hoping to receive Council's support on the termination of their lease. Also, in regard to the Cocoa Conservation area, he is concerned that the City does not have enough staff in house to maintain this area and hopes that some of the positions being requested in the upcoming fiscal year can be utilized for this.

Marlene Weiss, 2415 Tulane Dr., feels Cocoa should come together as one. She asked to open the gate to the Conservation area and for support on a community garden which she has been advocating for a while.

Diana Robinson, 1213 Alamanda Ln., has two children and frequents the parks. She feels that there is more of a need for a restroom at Fern and Provost Park than at Bracco Pond. She also pointed out that Tabernacle Church has been working on a plan to have a splash pad on Dixon Blvd. and asked Council to consider partnering with the Church on their splash pad to save money on the splash pad at Junny Rios Park.

Jennifer Riggs, 1629 N. Indian River Dr., noted that while she thinks a splash pad is a great idea, Provost Park could use a splash pad, as well as maybe a dog park and a food truck court as the park could use some positive energy.

Ms. Riggs added that she appreciates that Council is discussing not installing a bathroom at Bracco Park yet as she hasn't seen a lot of people there and didn't think there was a need for a bathroom at this time. She elaborated that the park has a lot of value and little by little improvements can be made and once the park demonstrates success the City can possibly go out for grant money and consider installing a bathroom at a later time.

Additionally, Ms. Riggs shared that the Cocoa High School's swim team is dying. Last year, due to Covid, the pool was closed and since then less and less students have showed up to try out for the swim team. At this point they are not sure if they will even be able to continue. She asked Council to consider partnering with the County and Eastern Florida State College to maintain the pool as it is an asset to the community.

Linda Dolphin, 2100 N. Indian River Dr., really believes it is important to look at the resources the City has and allocate them appropriately to some of the more impoverished neighborhoods in Cocoa. She does not believe that the City needs to invest more money into Junny Rios Park at this time. She added that she agrees with Ms. Riggs and feels that the City should either consider the swimming pool idea or maybe doing a splash pad at Provost Park or on Dixon Blvd. as previously mentioned. She asked if it was possible, and what needed to be done, in order to change some of the projects that have been approved.

Elise Blake Thomas, 6794 Soaring Ln., explained that she is having an issue with high water bills in her neighborhood, specifically in the Panther Ridge neighborhood on Coyote St⁴.

Councilmember Dyal inquired about the pool not being used at Eastern Florida State College. In response, Ms. Riggs wished to add that a few years back she met with Dr. Sibley and she explained that the pool is not a core use of the college anymore which is why they have not received funding for it.

Ms. Bowman shared that Mr. Smith has obtained quotes for the improvements at the Police Department and pointed out that the generator is throwing the cost over the amount that was allocated in the budget. She added that she is seeking approval from the Council to approve staff's recommendations.

- * **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Councilmember Dyal, to approve staff's recommendations.**

Ayes: Blake, Goins, Dyal, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

- * **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Councilmember Dyal, to take a two-minute recess.**

Ayes: Blake, Goins, Dyal, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

Mr. Smith asked for clarification on whether or not Councilmember Hearn's original motion was rescinded or not. In response, Mayor Blake clarified that the motion was not rescinded.

⁴ Mayor Blake left the meeting at 6:21pm and returned at 6:23pm

- * **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Goins; Seconded by Mayor Blake, to add a budget item to install a bathroom at Fern and Prospect park, for discussion.**

Discussion was held on where the funds would come from. It was decided that the funds would be pulled from Sustainability's budget.

Mayor Blake called the question.

Ayes: Blake, Goins, Dyal, Hearn

Nays: Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED (4-1)

Mr. Smith briefly discussed the Cocoa Conservation Area requirements.

Mr. Stoll asked Council to consider the prescribed fire assessment that was described in the plan since there was a wild fire in that area last week and there are also new apartments being built.

Chief Lamm explained that he and Mr. Smith have already discussed this, and he has made phone calls to which he was told that prescribed fire burns will not be done in that area since it will be so close to residential homes.

Discussion was held among the Council on the proposed budget impacts from newly maintained facilities/areas.

- * **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Councilmember Dyal, to incorporate District 4 parks and the Community Action Team building in the budget related to ongoing expenses.**

Ayes: Blake, Goins, Dyal, Hearn

Nays: Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED (4-1)

III. Adjournment:

- * **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Councilmember Dyal, to adjourn the City Council Workshop of June 1, 2021.**

AYES: Blake, Goins, Dyal, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Michael C. Blake, Mayor

ATTEST:

Carie Shealy, City Clerk