

Commission Meeting Minutes
June 6, 2023
5:30 pm

Mayor Scott Roberts said before we begin the official meeting of the Starke City Commission there will be a time of voluntary prayer. Those willing to do so are asked to stand and Commissioner Janice D. Mortimer will lead us in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Roberts called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

This meeting was the first regular meeting of the month. Members attending included Mayor Scott Roberts, Commissioner Janice D. Mortimer, Commissioner Danny Nugent, Commissioner Andy Redding and Commissioner Shannon Smith. Also present were Executive Assistant Cathy Bradley, City Clerk Jimmy Crosby, Deputy Clerk Lisa Heeder, Attorney Clay Martin, City Manager Drew Mullins and Police Major John Riles.

Mayor Roberts asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. Attorney Martin asked to add Resolutions 2023-41 and 2023-42 under the city attorney and for approval of the Weston Sampson Engineering Contract to be added under the city manager. Mr. Mullins asked to add the Master Pyro Contract for fireworks as item 11.C. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Smith made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Redding. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of the May 16, 2023 Commission Meeting, Resolution Number 2023-38 Interlocal Agreement with the Bradford County School Board for use of facilities for Splash Bash, Resolution Number 2023-39 Agreement with Toco Engineering for general engineering and consulting services, Resolution Number 2023-40 Agreement with Kimley-Horn and Associates for general engineering and consulting services and the commissioner bill review. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the consent agenda. It was seconded by Commissioner Redding. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts said the city was asked to do a proclamation for Mike Moore for his retirement. He entertained a motion. Commissioner Nugent made a motion to approve the proclamation. It was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts asked for emergency items. There were none.

Mayor Roberts asked for old business. There was none.

Mayor Roberts read the statement for citizen requests "The City of Starke welcomes you to this meeting. This time is set aside for our citizens and general public to address the city commission. This is not a question or answer time. It is not a political forum, nor is it a time for

personal accusations or derogatory remarks to or about city personnel. If you would like to address the commission, please complete a form, come to the podium when you are called, speak into the microphone and state your name and address for the record. Please also limit your comments to not more than three minutes. Your participation is welcomed.” Mayor Roberts asked Edythe Robinson to come forward. Mrs. Robinson thanked the commission for letting her speak. She expressed concern over plans to move Veterans Memorial Park. Mrs. Robinson said the memorial has been there for forty years. She asked the commission to think hard about moving it. Mayor Roberts asked Alvin Hunter to come forward. Mr. Hunter stated his address as 455 West Pratt Street. He said it is appropriate to have this discussion on the eighty-ninth anniversary of two thousand five hundred and one US soldiers dying at Normandy. Mr. Hunter thanked the American Legion and asked “Where were you on Memorial Day”. He said two elected officials showed up. Mr. Hunter said it turned into a fiasco. He said that is not directed at the American Legion. Mr. Hunter said that land was donated specifically for a Veterans Memorial so plans you have to move it may be in jeopardy. He asked Attorney Martin what he thought. Attorney Martin said he is not ready to render an opinion. Mr. Hunter asked that the resolution be rescinded. Mayor Roberts asked Mitchell Gunter to come forward. Mr. Gunter thanked the commission for the opportunity to speak. He said he has two family members listed at the park. Mr. Gunter said we live in a society that is tearing down monuments everywhere. He said there are people who died so you can serve on this board. Mr. Gunter said the condos could be built with a parking garage below them so there is parking for the people living there. He said Edwards Road Park is known for having kids hanging out there and he does not want the monuments desecrated. Mayor Roberts asked if anyone else would like to speak. There was no response. Commissioner Redding said he has some comments prepared. He said “What keyed this endeavor for me was when I took my 9-year-old daughter to the park. My great-grandfather fought in WWI, my grandfather served in WWII and the Florida Army National Guard until he retired. My father served 37 years in the Florida Army National Guard and fought in Afghanistan. So, while we were at the park, Kimber asked when PeePaw served. We walked around and saw memorials for WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. But she said what about when PeePaw served? Why is there nothing here for those soldiers? Do they not care about anyone since Vietnam? She also asked about the other conflicts before WWI because Kimber and her older brother Remington, have talked about other wars and conflicts that he has learned about in school, from his parents and his grandparents. Wars that have been fought for our freedom and the freedom of others. This made me begin to study more and more and ask the question of how many veterans are not being represented and honored. Well as it turns out, it’s millions, millions. From 1775 to 1902, over 125 years of American History. There was the American Revolution, War of 1812, Indian Wars, Mexican War, Civil War, Spanish-American War. Almost 3.2 million veterans served during that period of time and they’re not represented. At the current park, there are monuments honoring veterans for

WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. There are approximately 7.8 million veterans today that have served during the Gulf War Era from 1990-Present, they are not represented. Furthermore, There is nothing honoring female veterans. There is nothing honoring veterans of color. Yet there is a monument honoring K-9s, horses, pigeons, and dolphins. Current logistical issues with the park. Parking, there are less than 30 official parking spaces within a reasonable proximity of the park, only 6 of those are immediately adjacent to the park. Otherwise, you have to walk for blocks or park illegally on private property. Safety, there is a continual flow of traffic around this area which has become even more congested and more constrained because of the overpass. The overpass that has been lobbied for and demanded for decades. At the Memorial Day event I almost got rear ended because you have to back out into traffic from one of the limited parking spaces. There is no ease of access for citizens and/or veterans with disabilities to access or move around the area. Size, the current park is only 4/10ths of an acre which is just over 17,000 square feet. The elevation of the current property is significantly lower than the current grade of the surrounding properties and is effectively in a hole, and with the way the connector road for the overpass has been built it will be even more prone to flooding in the future. Comments have been made about vandalism if the park is relocated. Well, on April 17, 2023 I visited the park doing research and a Confederate flag had been put in place of the American flag. So, the current location is certainly not exempt from vandalism. We can go back and search the archives because this has happened before. From the beginning of April until now I have received zero, that's zero with a z, phone calls or emails regarding this project. I have provided my information to multiple people here tonight, some on more than one occasion. Zero communication. Only honoring veterans from WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam does not adhere to this mission. Let's talk about the positives. The City is committed to at least \$100K on the park to Provide a safe, accessible location that is 1.27 acres, which is over 300% bigger than the current location. There will be safe onsite parking, with potentially as many as 50 to 70 parking spaces. And there will be disabled parking where you're not having to be in fear of getting ran into, ran over, or falling down. And there will be plenty of parking on the opposite side of the road also, with a dedicated crosswalk. The property will be video monitored by our local law enforcement, as is the sports complex across the street. The location is only 1200 feet from the American Legion Hall and only 800 feet from the Army National Guard Armory. This will present endless opportunities for events that honor all veterans, active soldiers, events at the Legion, and events at the sports complex. It has been said that the new location is miles away and hidden. This is false. It's only 4500 feet from the current location and 4 minute drive per google. Furthermore, it will be located in conjunction with the sports complex, where thousands of youth and their families come to, throughout the year. Thousands plus these youth are, our future. Our future soldiers, nurses, firefighters, law enforcement officers, and the list goes on. These are the future leaders of our community, Florida, and America. We have to invest in them, and ingrain in them, what it is to be an American Patriot. This is accomplished

by showing the youth, our citizens, our community and beyond that we honor and cherish ALL veterans, we are committed to all Veterans, and that we recognize and show respect for the sacrifices that have been made for our freedom because freedom is not free!” Mr. Gunter asked if he could respond. Mayor Roberts said you have already spoken we are not getting in a debate tonight. Mayor Roberts said if anyone would like to contact Commissioner Redding and set up a meeting that would be well advised. Commissioner Nugent said it was a nice speech but he agrees with the Legion wanting to stay where they have been for forty years. He said at the ballfield you will have to cross the road. Commissioner Nugent said if anyone wanted to donate they could add more monuments. He said without the soldier we would not have Starke and he supports the Legion staying where they are.

Mayor Roberts asked to move on to Ordinance Number 2023-05 procedures for procurement of goods and services on second reading. Attorney Martin read the ordinance by title. He said if the commission wishes, the appropriate motion would be to adopt Ordinance Number 2023-05 on second reading. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve Ordinance Number 2023-05 on second reading. Commissioner Smith made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Mortimer. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts asked for the City Clerk report. Clerk Crosby said planning ahead the first Tuesday in July is July 4th and the FMEA Conference is on July 18th. He suggested having one meeting in July on July 11th unless something comes up. Mayor Roberts said they could call a special meeting if necessary. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion to cancel the July 4th and the July 18th meetings and hold a meeting on July 11th. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts asked for the City Manager report. Mr. Mullins said the first item is the waterline replacement grant for \$700,000. He said Infrastructure Consulting and Engineering was the only respondent. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve the ranking sheets and for Mr. Mullins to enter into contract negotiations. Commissioner Smith made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Redding. Clerk Crosby said the commission agreed to put \$50,000 in matching dollars on this grant that gave enough points to get the grant. He said it seems to be a trend. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts asked for the Police Chief Report. Major Riles had nothing to report.

Attorney Martin addressed Resolution Number 2023-41. He said it is an agreement with Colliers International Valuation and Advisory Services for appraisal of the property that is subject to the eminent domain case on Call Street for the proposed lift station. Attorney Martin said the second resolution number 42 is an agreement with Saalfeld Shad to represent the owner of that property that is an estate and requires the city to pay for and the court to appoint an administrator ad litem. He said the cost for the appraisal will be \$6,500 and the law’s firm

should not exceed \$5,000. Attorney Martin is asking the commission to approve the resolutions. Mayor Roberts asked if they could be approved at the same time. Attorney Martin said they could. Mayor Roberts asked about possible compensation that was talked about. Attorney Martin said it is possible that the proceeds could be used to compensate the attorney but that is not a given. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve Resolution Number 2023-41 and 2023-42. Commissioner Smith made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Redding. Commissioner Mortimer asked Attorney Martin if this attorney is someone he has vetted and knows. Attorney Martin said this attorney has performed this service before on eminent domain cases. The motion passed 5-0. Attorney Martin said they expect to come back at the July meeting with the appraisal.

Mr. Mullins addressed the Weston and Sampson contract. He said this is one of the six firms they selected. Attorney Martin said there was not time to prepare a resolution but this needs to be approved tonight to meet deadlines. Commissioner Nugent said you want us to approve it but we have not read it. Attorney Martin said it is the same contract that was used for Toco Engineering and Kimley-Horn that was approved. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve the contract. Commissioner Nugent made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts asked for the fireworks contract. Mr. Mullins said this is to purchase the fireworks from Master Pyrotechnics and for them to shoot them off. He said the interlocal agreement was passed on the consent agenda. Mr. Mullins said there is a \$5,000 donation and the city is paying \$10,000. Commissioner Redding said the contract says 2024-2025. He asked if the contract is being extended. Mr. Mullins said it is just for this year. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the contract with Master Pyro Display. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. The motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Nugent said he wants to do a budget amendment to take \$250,000 out of reserves because the fire department has \$60,000 and let Mr. Mullins and the fire department work on their budget internally. Commissioner Nugent said he just wants to give them more time. He asked the commission to consider voting to do a budget amendment. Commissioner Nugent said he brought this up because he won't be here on June 20th. Mayor Roberts said that is a comment from you and it is not on the agenda and we have a lot of information to go over on June 20th. Mayor Roberts said we moved the meeting to June 20th because you said you would be in town because it was important for everyone to be here. He said he appreciates Commissioner Nugent's comments and asked if he had any more. Commissioner Nugent asked if they could do an emergency item and help the fire department out. Mayor Roberts said he does not know what to do with that and it is not the appropriate time and we are going to take a lot into consideration on June 20th. He said it has put us in an awkward spot.

Commissioner Mortimer said the 1st Annual Juneteenth Pageant and Gala is on June 17th at the Fairgrounds at 5:00 pm and everyone is invited.

Commissioner Redding had nothing further.

Commissioner Smith had nothing further.

Commissioner Nugent said he will be here on the 20th.

Mayor Roberts had nothing further.

There being no further business Mayor Roberts asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Redding. The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 pm.