

Commission Meeting Minutes
August 1, 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 Smith 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, Police Major John Riles and Fire Chief Gary Wise.

Mayor Roberts asked if there were any changes, additions or deletions to the agenda. Commissioner Smith asked to remove item 4.A. from the consent agenda. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion. Commissioner Smith made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda consisted of the Bradford High School Homecoming Parade route Friday, September 29, 2023, the surplus police vehicles and the commissioner bill review. Commissioner Redding made a motion to approve the consent agenda. It was seconded by Commissioner Mortimer. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts asked for emergency items. There were none.

Mayor Roberts asked for the American Legion under old business. American Legion Post 56 Commander Norman Dowdy came forward. He said he has a petition with over 500 signatures stating that city and county residents do not want Veterans Park relocated to Edwards Road. Mr. Dowdy said on July 18, 2023 the American Legion and members of the Downtown Merchants met to discuss the memorial relocation which resulted in a compromise they would like to present to the commission. He said they would like the memorial relocated to the east end of the downtown park next to the grandstand utilizing the 35,650 square feet and utilizing the retention pond to showcase all service flags including the POW, MIA, fire and police along with the flags currently at the park and protecting them from maleficence. He requested a memorial representing our fallen military and first responders to be located on a concrete wall opposite the retention pond renaming the entire park the Charles Schaefer Veterans and First Responders Park. Mr. Dowdy asked to relocate current and future memorials to include first responders and fallen law enforcement officers along the walkway around the retention pond. He said citizens could purchase bricks to honor military service and their sacrifices. He requested notification when any monuments are to be moved and approval be sought from the

Post so they can have proper representation to ensure proper placement at the new location. Mr. Dowdy said money has already been appropriated for moving the park. Mayor Roberts asked if the big request is to put the memorial in the circle on the map. Mr. Dowdy said yes sir. Mayor Roberts asked if they want to rename the entire downtown park. Chrissy Allen said the park that is called the square. She said DOT is working with them but they need an ok from the commission. Ms. Allen said they would like a motion to put the park in that general area instead of Edwards Road. Commissioner Smith said during the design phase DOT said this could be a dry area as well. Ms. Allen agreed. She said there is another city along US Highway 301 that has grates over the pond with the flags and they have not had vandalism. Commissioner Nugent asked if there would be a fountain. Ms. Allen said that would be up to the design. Mayor Roberts said there is a resolution on the record to move the park and they need to rescind that. Mayor Roberts said there has been additional input about renaming the whole park and he does not want any confusion about that part of the request. He thanked them for coming and talking to the commission. Mayor Roberts said we need a motion to rescind Resolution Number 2023-33. Commissioner Nugent made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion passed 5-0. Mayor Roberts said we need to look at the request to put the park back downtown. He said some of the details still need to be worked out. Commissioner Smith asked if they need a resolution. Attorney Martin said it is up to the commission. Mayor Roberts said they could pass a resolution at another time. He entertained a motion to put it in the circle on the map. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion to approve the request from the American Legion to move Veterans Park to the requested location. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. The motion passed 5-0. Ms. Allen thanked the commissioners.

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." He said we are going to have a good meeting but informed the participants that if they do not follow the rules they will be asked to leave. Mayor Roberts called Randy Wyse with the International Association of Firefighters. Mr. Wyse said he has done a municipal financial analysis on the budget and the city is not in a financial crisis. He said cutting firefighters is a serious safety issue to the citizens. He said there are some serious issues to cutting firefighters related to OSHA. Mr. Wyse said reducing a 4 man crew to a 2 man crew will not affect response time but it will greatly extend the time it takes to get the job done. He thanked Mr. Mullins for being willing to sit down with him to discuss the union contract.

Mayor Roberts called Stuart Brandrick. Mr. Brandrick said he is one of the city's firefighters. He said they responded to a baby not breathing and cutting staff would have caused a change for the baby. He said there are 10 people in a trauma room at UF because there is a lot that has to be done quickly.

Mayor Roberts called John Keane. Mr. Keane stated his address as 625 Stockton Street in Jacksonville. He said he is the former Vice President of Professional Firefighters of Florida District 1 and he served 29 years at the Jacksonville Fire Department as well as the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Keane said providing essential life-saving services to the citizens is the first requirement of the government. He urged the commissioners to consider the safety of their citizens. Mr. Keane thanked the commissioners for the opportunity to speak.

Mayor Roberts called Michael Hauncher. Mr. Hauncher did not respond.

Mayor Roberts called Judith Young. Ms. Young said she owns a house on Cherry Street and where it stands 4 man crews can be effective and you are wanting to cut that in half. She said she lives in a row of historic homes made of fat lighter. Ms. Young said fat lighter can ignite from the spark from a house next to it. She said fat lighter fires take an insane amount of water to extinguish. Ms. Young said budget cuts puts everyone in her neighborhood at risk. She said first responders are not the place to make cuts and you guys are elected by the people of Starke.

Mayor Roberts called Chrissy Allen. Ms. Allen introduced Justin Sparks and said on behalf of the Downtown Merchants and businesses downtown they would like to see the fire department stay the way it is but she understands budgeting. She said she would rather pay for the services than have them taken away. Ms. Allen said she is here to help in anyway she can. Mr. Sparks said as a father, business owner and member of the Downtown Merchants he is part of the events and he will feel much safer knowing their children were safe and they had proper response time. He said having 2 on is not enough coverage. Ms. Allen said they support their firefighters and law enforcement.

Mayor Roberts called Julie Ann Morris. Ms. Morris said she lives in Starke and knows 2 firefighters is not enough for any situation. She said she would prefer a tax increase. Ms. Morris said 1 life saved is worth the extra money you may have to pay for the firefighters.

Mayor Roberts called Katie Cox. Ms. Cox introduced her daughter Harper whose daddy is a Starke Firefighter. She said it is unfortunate and she asked why not move funds to help fill the need that is still out there. She asked that they reconsider 1 more option.

Mayor Roberts said that is all the forms he has. He asked if he missed anybody. Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Mullins when the meeting with Mr. Wyse is and what the timeframe is. Mr. Mullins said the contract says the mayor is the representative for the city. Mr. Wyse said he is willing to meet anytime. Commissioner Smith said it would be great if they could meet as quickly as possible. Mayor Roberts said they will work on that.

Mayor Roberts called for Ordinance Number 2023-06 amending Ordinance Number 2023-02 extending the existing moratorium on the acceptance and processing of applications for telecommunications towers and antennas. Attorney Martin read the ordinance by title. Mayor

Roberts entertained a motion to adopt Ordinance Number 2023-06. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion to approve Ordinance Number 2023-06 as read by title. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts called for Ordinance Number 2023-07 amending city employee retirement systems to clarify that the accumulated contributions that are returned include the contributions made by the employee and the city. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve Ordinance Number 2023-07. Commissioner Smith made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Redding. Commissioner Nugent asked if this is going to be retro. Attorney Martin said the effective date is the date of reading. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts called for the city clerk report. Clerk Crosby said the commission must decide on a proposed millage to go out with the property tax notices on August 4, 2023. He said the options are the rolled-back rate of 4.6804 for \$1,179,713, the current rate of 4.8754 for \$1,228,863, the recommendation at the last meeting of 5.4935 for \$1,384,658 or to increase it to 6.0429 for \$1,523,136 which requires a 2/3 majority vote. Clerk Crosby said whatever is passed tonight is the highest you can go but you can always go down. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion. Commissioner Smith made a motion to set the millage at 5.4935. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. Commissioner Smith said the only reason he is raising the millage is to instruct the city manager to try to get three men on shift for the fire department. He said if not he will be asking to bring it back down to the current rate. Commissioner Nugent said the only reason he is for this is to help the fire department and the police department. Mayor Roberts said in the past they use the rolled-back rate but he wants to leave it where it is. He called for a vote. The motion passed 3-2. Commissioner Mortimer and Mayor Roberts opposed the motion.

Mayor Roberts called for the city manager's report. Mr. Mullins said by adjusting staffing patterns and hours they can keep 12 firemen on staff. Commissioner Smith asked how long that can be sustained. Mr. Mullins said that is still to be determined. Mayor Roberts said he spoke to the county and they will work with us on attrition. He asked if this could last for 6 months. Mr. Mullins said yes.

Mr. Mullins said he emailed an update on the wastewater treatment plant to the commissioners.

Major Riles said the police department finished third in traffic safety in the state. Commissioner Mortimer asked how they did last year. Major Riles said they finished first.

Attorney Martin had nothing to report.

Commissioner Nugent had nothing to report.

Commissioner Mortimer had nothing further.

Commissioner Redding told Major Riles that semis are parking on State Road 16 creating a safety hazard. He asked Mr. Mullins to pursue solutions for drainage on Pratt Street.

Commissioner Smith mentioned pulling out on State Road 16 at dark being hazardous.

Mayor Roberts said he has gotten phone calls about the semis parking on State Road 16. He thanked everyone for an orderly meeting.

There being no further business Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent and the meeting was adjourned at 6:38 pm.