

Commission Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2024
5:30 pm

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

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

This was the first regular meeting of the month. Members in attendance included Mayor Scott Roberts, Commissioner Janice D. Mortimer, Commissioner Danny Nugent, Commissioner Andy Redding and Commissioner Shannon Smith. Also present were Zoning & Planning Office Manager Lance Campbell, City Clerk Jimmy Crosby, Deputy Clerk Lisa Heeder, Police Chief Jeff Johnson, Attorney Scott Walker, City Manager Drew Mullins, Building and Zoning Official Kevin Powell and Bradford County Sheriff Gordon Smith.

Mayor Roberts asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. Mr. Mullins asked to remove item 11.B. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion to approve the agenda with the change. 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 minutes of the January 16, 2024 Commission Meeting, Resolution Number 2024-19 approving a construction and maintenance agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation for maintenance of rapid flashing beacons in order to improve pedestrian safety , Resolution Number 2024-20 approving an agreement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for administration of grant funds from the Statewide Water Quality Restoration Projects Fund, Resolution Number 2024-21 relating to the State Revolving Fund Loan Program authorizing the preparation and submission of a loan application, Resolution Number 2024-22 accepting conveyance of an easement for Wawa 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 called for emergency items. There were 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 limit your comments to not more than three minutes. Your participation is welcomed." Mayor Roberts

called for Alvin Hunter. Mr. Hunter stated his address as 455 West Pratt Street. He recognized the work Clerk Crosby has done allowing access to audits. He said he is impressed by the audits. Mr. Hunter expressed concern about the last meeting and a lack of professionalism. He said Mayor Roberts says he does what he thinks is best for the city. Mr. Hunter said he thinks they all do what they think is best for the city. Mayor Roberts called for Albert Mize. Mr. Mize said he has a store at 139 East Call Street. He expressed concern about the defunding of the police department and the transfer of property.

Mayor Roberts called for public hearings. There were none.

Mayor Roberts called for quasi-judicial hearings. Attorney Walker asked anyone who wishes to give testimony to come to the podium. He administered the oath to tell the truth and nothing but the truth to Mr. Powell. Attorney Walker asked the commissioners if they have had any ex-parte communications. Commissioner Nugent said no. Commissioner Smith said no. Commissioner Mortimer said no. Commissioner Redding said no and Mayor Roberts said no. Attorney Walker read Ordinance 2024-05 by title. Mr. Powell said there are 2 items one being the future land use plan map change. He said it is an approximately 8 acre parcel located on the corner of Weldon Street and 16. It is currently zoned R1C and they are looking at rezoning it to B3 but we have to change the future land use map to commercial from residential. Mr. Powell said the applicant is here if there are any questions. He said the change is consistent with the area. Mr. Powell asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Mortimer asked what is it about R1C that won't allow what the property owners are trying to do. Mr. Powell said R1C is residential and they are wanting a commercial zoning and it is consistent with the area because of 16 being a business corridor. Commissioner Mortimer asked if the Planning & Zoning Board has looked at this. Mr. Powell said yes and it voted 3 to 1 in favor. Commissioner Smith asked with it going to commercial on both sides would there be a chance of DOT putting a light in there. Mr. Powell said it would make sense but that is up to DOT. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion for first reading. Commissioner Redding made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-05 on first reading. It was seconded by Commissioner Mortimer. The motion passed 5-0. Mayor Roberts called for Ordinance 2024-06. Attorney Walker read the ordinance by title. Mr. Powell said this is the second part of the process. He asked if there were any questions. There were none. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve first reading of Ordinance 2024-06. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-06 on first reading. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Roberts called for the City Clerk Report. Clerk Crosby reminded the commissioners about the Northeast Florida League of Cities meeting on February 15th which we are hosting so contact the Deputy Clerk if you would like to attend and it is going to be at the Armory on Edwards Road.

Mayor Roberts called for the City Manager Report. Mr. Mullins said the police transition update is next. He asked Sheriff Smith to come up and review what he's got. Sheriff Smith said it is my pleasure to come before you all to share what we've been doing to transition. It's actually been

quite the experience not too many flubs. Myself and Chief Johnson met the next morning basically going over with the city manager, kind of know what needed to be done met with his staff that afternoon in regards to it, but I before I start you'll see the organizational chart there before you. You'll see it has all the command staff, the people there and on the back you'll have their phone number and e-mail address and as the sheriff I want you to know sometimes I'm the lag bolt. You called me, and I mean well, but I get sidetracked with the next conversation or somebody in the office or the next event and I want you to fully understand you can call direct to the command staff that's here. We show up. You put a face to it. I can tell you I'm very proud, Major Dawn McKinley is the director of the jail. She has been the longest serving employee with thirty-five years with the Sheriff's Office, so she knows it inside and out. So if you have somebody that contacts you from the city in reference with their loved ones, who may need their medicine, maybe need to see them. How to do that? We're going to have some exciting information at the end but you can contact her or Captain Dalton Diggs. He's the day-to-day get it done something with an inmate squad. Maybe you don't have inmates something on the weekend a pothole pops up. You need help with something. You can contact Captain Diggs. These are all lifelong residents of Bradford County that know how to get things done and serve their community with that next to him is Captain Josh Luke. He's over investigations. He said Captain Josh Luke raise your hand. He's married to one of the Torode daughters. I don't know how they didn't kill him, but no, he's actually a good Christian man, a deacon out at Kingsley Lake Baptist Church. He's also over communications. So if you have a problem, somebody said some communications need to hear a call, check and see if something came in. That's his department. I mentioned Major Dawn McKinney. She's also been selected by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for an area expert to be used in corrections in Tallahassee. For somebody that's there so they're using her for that. Major George Konkel is Chief of Operations. So day-to-day stuff, the vehicles, everything you see going on with that. A lifelong resident and one of our first Explorers ever with the City of Starke. We have this First Start Explorer Program. His son's, also a deputy, his brother works in the jail as a Sergeant, so his family's been entrenched. He's an old Lawtey boy. Nothing wrong with that. Kevin Mueller who will be your liaison for day-to-day operations for Drew to go back and forth. When you need something, he will be that guy. Raised in Starke his whole life. His family had the Gator II Farm Supply. His grandfather Fred Mueller had what is known as the spray field now. That was all theirs so very connected to the city and what goes on during the operations and of course, Colonel Brad Smith. He's the one that really does all the work. I just get handed the stuff to do. Well, I was smart enough to hire people smarter than me to surround myself with but I can tell you that. Commissioner Mortimer asked who's the guy with the tie. Sheriff Smith said I passed over Brad Witt he's the young guy in the crowd. But no, he's married to a local family to a Cragg. He out threw his coverage, but the family is here. Another Lawtey boy with ties to the community, his father. But he is our Director of Emergency Management and his team in times emergency I want you to pick up the phone and a lot of times you don't have to come to the complex now while preparing for the storm, he has a lot of technology to get you zoomed in no matter where you're at. That you'd be a part of that. He has set up all those things and I'm very

proud of that. He does a lot in that arena and if there's money out there to get he's always digging to get money for mitigation and that mitigation strategy is very, very important in obtaining grants. He's got that up and running so if they have a litigation meeting to have the city representatives there is very important because they look at that grant cycle, they see what's on the mitigation plan and make sure you're there and making sure yours gets to the top of that mitigation plan for water access, roads all that and those kind of things that are needed. Shelters, generators, those type of things. I mentioned our liaison, but I can tell you this transition would not go as smoothly and I can tell you I and Chief Johnson most times get in the way. Just going to put it out there, but Major Molina he's here somewhere. Captain Molina and Major Riles, they've both been helping the system, getting stuff that's needed to make the transition smooth. So I want to say thank you to them. Employee status that next morning when we met. We actually went that afternoon at 2:00 with Chief Johnson to speak to his people. We then handed everybody an application. Of those we received five and two were offered conditional offers of employment. One came back a few days later, said he's going into the private sector in regards to it. We did back preliminary backgrounds on a couple of others Captain Luke found some issues that would disqualify them for us and the chief gave me advice on another one so of that, we're actually winding up with one full time and winding up with one part time guy from Camp Blanding, which is a very phenomenal individual. Of the other six I know two were probably going to other agencies because I spoke to sheriff's for them. I know that Chief Johnson brought in recruiters from GPD, University PD so he's trying to do what he can to make sure they all have opportunities to go there in regards to it and one or two of those who were let go from our agency would not be eligible for rehire. So that's where we were at with the status, but I can tell you that Chief Johnson has worked hard in doing letters and reaching out, so those all have opportunities along the line. February 28th is what I was told but maybe you know something different. They changed the date FDLE will be here to go through the evidence room. Chief Johnson said the 19th I think. Sheriff Smith said they changed it. They came back with a different date. They'll come in to do the inventory, the evidence room, and they told us 90 to 95% of the cases will be destroyed. We'll have to take some of the old cases. Good thing about it is we're on the same records management system as the state so they can do some of their stuff there, switching it makes it easy. We do barcode scanning, they'll flip it all then and make that transition as smooth as possible. In the meantime, they're working on the inventory. The vehicles while I'm on the vehicles, you'll see a handout. That's what will be on our patrol cars. The eight cars that we get from the city and the tracking and equipment, the end of the year, two years from now, five years from now, every time we replace those cars on one side of the front, you'll see what we have. Below 100, which is a safety message for all the deputies on the other side will have a decal it looks just like this with your approval. We wanted to make sure y'all approved this before we placed anything on there and transitions to the vehicles. We just thought we needed to do it. It helps track property, those type of things that belong to the city in regards to that. Also, all the new cars will be equipped with unlock kits. Every deputy is issued an unlock kit. And as you see basically a lot of our calls inside the city with the Walmarts, Winn Dixies have to do with unlocking vehicles because every deputy is

issued one of those in their cars it's a full kit. It's a couple hundred bucks. They have software in their car that can tell you what make and model and how to enter it and it helps them unlock cars. That's a service that we offer through the Sheriff's Office. We took one week of stats approximately on the 29th of January. We took over the handling of all calls for service within the city. Upon doing so, you'll see there were four hundred eighty five calls for service. Of that ninety one of them were traffic stops inside the city. Remember any citation that we issue inside the city, those revenues still come to the city. We don't collect any of it. If it's written, it says City of Starke by law those still come to the city. There were six traffic crashes, five reckless drivers, three road obstructions, four assaults, assist citizen escorts four, threat harassment calls three suspicious incidents or persons somebody might call in whatever may be suspicious vehicles nine, two thefts and three alarm calls. We had one hundred sixty six extra patrols. That are checking the calls that come in and the Captain Mueller placed on forty two extra patrols performed in the district schools because during the day Monday through Friday you have five school protection deputies right here within the city limits at all times plus you have a supervisor that releases if one's out sick, absent their there for extra duty. Then you also have one at Bradford Elementary and you have one at Lawtey and you have one at Booker. So you have school protection deputies throughout the county for the schools. Serving civil papers we have thirty inside the city and assist citizens Hence we realized that one of those duties is going to be lock kits for those cars. They've already been purchased. I know Captain Mueller is already getting prepared as we get the vehicles for them. They've got four vehicles already, got them cleaned, getting ready to be striped as soon as we get Trent. Everything is local and this Friday, you'll start seeing the striping on those. I can tell you that Major Riles and them are working on getting other cars and the people into other cars. I think chief, I believe all your guys are on day shift now unless they're working off duty detail or something in the afternoon they're they are on the day shift. So, they're there to back up or whatever. But it's only fair that I don't want to criticize. I know most of them are looking for a place to go. I know one is coming over to us and because the chief has some relief there, knowing as he loses them, we're grabbing the equipment because we got guns and rifles now, but we don't have all the extras until they come and they're released and you got to keep track of it. His people are keeping track of that as they leave. I'm not sure if he's had any leave yet or not. I don't know in regards to that, so that is some of the update on what we're doing with the transition. I myself I think everybody's worked relatively well together, haven't had any complaints brought to my desk, everybody's been fully cooperative. So, it's smoother than I envisioned, and I hope in the next 30 days we'll be done. We've been working now since last August, maybe September on a new sheriff's app that will go on your phone because 95% of our residents have smartphones and with that smartphone they'll be an app that you can use. It will do push notifications. If they are chasing somebody in your neighborhood, it will be pushed, you'll know to lock your doors, we've got an escapee, we've got a flooding issue where they may have to boil water. That will go across that app. You can also you check for warrants on your neighbor if you like. You can access that now. It'll just be up within the app. It will do news and events which I keep posted. What news and events is going on in the area in the community. It will do sex offender predator

searches. We'll hit that app and go to that part of the app search immediately. You can do anonymous tip submission that is smart enough if you put it in when you send it it encrypts it so we don't know where it comes from. They'll come in to a tip line to give us anonymous tips. It'll give you a list of recent arrests. If somebody calls you and says hey, did you hear about the little Johnny? Johnny got arrested. Before you start telling somebody, you can confirm it so it's not gossip. I'm saying you can confirm it and it will give you live dispatch calls. If you see a patrol car in your neighborhood, it won't pinpoint directly, but it'll show a general area and it won't give all the names but it'll say it's a disturbance or it's sick or ill person or a car crash. So you'll be able to know when you, as a Commissioner, would be able to if somebody calls you, if they don't have the app, you'll be able to tell pretty quick, what that's in regards to. So that's the down and dirty of what we've got. I wanted you to see them, have their numbers, put a face to it and anything we can do to assist. I can't think of anything else I've got. Chief Johnson said I have some stuff to do but I can do it now or do it later. Mayor Roberts said are you talking about a report. Chief Johnson said on the property stuff we have to do on the property to get it to him. Commissioner Mortimer said I have a question for you. So, the app that you're talking about will your staff assist us with the downloading and how to work and maneuver it. Sheriff Smith said we'll help anybody that needs it. Yes, ma'am. It will be like the App Store. If you need help with getting you signed up because it benefits us for emergency alerts. Like I always tell everybody our Everbridge, you'll be able to get to Everbridge from that. You might say what is Everbridge? Well, if you're on vacation in California or your vacation, where ever, a weather alert may come across in your area that you subscribe to and there's a tornado you can call your house. You can say get down there's a tornado coming. Or, hey, there's an escaped inmate in the area, or there's a boil water alert. Those alerts through Everbridge if you sign up, that's on our Sheriff's Office page now gives you those emergency alerts and updates. You get a lot of storm updates. Florida every afternoon sometimes it seems like with a severe thunderstorm warning or the other day we had a tornado that went through by Camp Blanding. They gave updates real quick and my phone was I was talking to somebody they said oh my phone was going off and I said, oh yeah, mine is too. They kind of give us updates and that's all through Director Witt's Office. Yeah, I've got a few extras here. We do town hall meetings and what you can expect from us. This is one if you haven't got it. We've got a few left because we're in a brand New Year, but every year we do this. This year will be 2023 At a Glance. This is 2022 it gives you all the different divisions, gives you the elected officials which I have y'all in there. It has pictures, gives us all the numbers we've been doing. The type of calls answered, what we do, how many traffic stops, how many citations. We do a lot more traffic stops than we actually do citations. It will tell you the 911 calls and thefts reported. Like in 2022 we had one hundred sixty six theft reports, 2021 we had one hundred fifty four but it gives you comparisons so kind of keeps you informed of what we are doing. So, here in the next month or so Zach, who couldn't make it tonight, he's an instructor at Santa Fe and had an important class. So, he's our evidence custodian and crime scene tech. But he also does all the videos you see on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A lot of what he does probably all our videos and stats and designs. He is also one of our Armed Guard members so you'll be seeing some of that if you

actually want to see what that's like and then you say, how do we track who's in the city, who's not in the city. I can tell you that we do it in real time. I was showing Commissioner Mortimer earlier that at any given time we can pull up and see where the deputies patrol cars are located. Who they're assigned to, see what the call is they are on. Like right now, you've got one, two, three, four, five, six, seven deputies in the city as we stand. So that's how we keep track and monitor making sure we're living up to our commitment, our promise. We're tracking our response times to make sure we're not living in what was the past like Chief Johnson said. And we will make sure we meet or exceed. So that's how we're monitoring it all. We just want to keep you informed and we'll be at every commission meeting. We'll be here to along with Chief Johnson. Mayor Roberts asked if there are any other questions? Commissioner Nugent said on the property, I know there's some of the equipment coming. Not having a full staff like we had here. So, I was wondering, like we have some F-150 trucks. Are you wanting them too or can we assume them in the other departments. Sheriff Smith said we took the better of the vehicles in regards to what was there. I wanted Chief Johnson's vehicle but he did not want to give it up but right now we wanted marked vehicles. We took the four pickup trucks and we're looking to get the better of the Chargers that intertwines with our fleet and it makes it good, but you'll still have got a couple of. Commissioner Nugent said but you are only going to have a couple patrolling. I'm just thinking you know some of those things we could use in our departments. Danny. Danny, don't. Don't think. Don't think. Commissioner Nugent said you don't want to give them up I guessed I'd just ask. Sheriff Smith said no, that's just for the employees we hire and one extra in case one goes down. It just keeps us up but we are marking them, we're stickering them. So, as those charges are replaced in two years if they need to be replaced a sticker goes on the side. If something goes, heaven forbid that y'all decide to go back to your police department. You know what equipment you brought and served. So, it's there. We want to hold ourselves accountable, we're not here to make anything of it, we've got to serve the citizens that elect us into office. Commissioner Nugent said Brad is smiling, and he must be. Sheriff Smith said you know he won't. Colonel Smith said we are taking eight vehicles, but they're going to be frontline officers that are responding. We want to make sure that they have equipment that's going to get them to where they need to be. Commissioner Nugent said he basically wanted to know what they had left that we could salvage. Sheriff Smith said his truck is better than his but we wanted marked vehicles. We have enough investigators. You've got to realize during the day you've got about seven to eight investigators on duty. You've got five in the city school protection deputies you have 5 or 6-7 command staff, plus four deputies are out working, so if something happens we're prepared and we train regularly, so we're here to serve and I appreciate what y'all doing in supporting us. I appreciate Chief Johnson supporting and his men, but we're trying to get it done and do the will of the commission. Mayor Roberts asked if there are any other questions? Sheriff Smith said he wants to dispell one myth we've not fired anybody. We've not fired anybody. I promise you. Colonel Smith said those were previous employees. Mr. Mize said I'm just quoting the newspaper. Brad Smith said that newspaper was talking about previous employees that we had that we fired and then hired five people. Mr. Mize said that wasn't clear. Commissioner Mortimer thanked Sheriff Smith.

Mr. Mullins said he had a couple of things one is a monthly report. He said he wants to keep you informed of what is going on at the plant and the city. Mr. Mullins said there is a photo essay so you can see the progress going on so you can see the progress being made. He said as Commissioner Smith said at the last meeting, we did pass our toxicity test so the effluent coming out of the plant is clean for the first time in years. Commissioner Mortimer said because of the progress has the consent order been lifted. Mr. Mullins said it won't be lifted until the new plant is built because that is what prompted the new plant. He said he also printed a report on building permits. He said there has been a resignation on the Zoning Board and he would like some guidance on how to proceed. Commissioner Nugent said he knows someone who is knowledgeable and he will give the name to Mr. Powell. Mayor Roberts said there are a couple of ways we could handle this. We could ask for public applications or each commissioner could give names to Mr. Mullins. He said it is the pleasure of the board. Commissioner Mortimer said she thinks both. Mayor Roberts asked what the term is for the board. Mr. Campbell said three years.

Mayor Roberts called for the law enforcement report. Chief Johnson said they have some things that need to be surplussed. He said the first one is an old Chevrolet Tahoe with 106,000 miles. He said the volunteer fire department from Hilliard has asked for it and the sheriff does not want it and Mr. Mullins can't use it. Chief Johnson said it needs to be surplussed first. Clerk Crosby said it is a common practice to donate vehicles between cities and counties. Commissioner Smith asked if Chief Johnson has checked with the agencies within the county. Chief Johnson said yes and it is older than anything they have. Commissioner Mortimer said there are going to be other vehicles that need to be surplussed. She asked if he is going to do them one at a time. Chief Johnson said we have already shifted the trucks but they have not been surplussed. Commissioner Mortimer asked if Chief Johnson could make a list of vehicles. He said he will bring them as they come up to the next meeting. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion. Commissioner Nugent made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Redding. The motion passed 5-0. Chief Johnson said we have the four F-150s with the equipment, the radars, everything that's in these vehicles. He said the vehicles are valued at \$161,027.65 and they need to be surplussed. He asked Attorney Walker if that is correct. Attorney Walker said there is a public purpose involved in the process and we can work it out. Chief Johnson said he believes it is in our ordinance that we can give to other agencies. Sheriff Smith said you can transfer to other governmental agencies. Commissioner Mortimer said I thought it was six vehicles he got from us. Chief Johnson said he is getting eight total but these are the ones they have. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to surplus the four F-150s. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion to surplus these four F-150s. It was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion passed 5-0. Chief Johnson said there is a list of equipment the sheriff has already picked up. It is tasers, rifles, glocks and 22s. Chief Johnson said the value is \$34,834 and he needs it surplussed. Commissioner Nugent asked if it includes night vision. Chief Johnson said they had to be turned back in. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to surplus the list of weapons provided by the chief. Commissioner Redding made a motion to surplus. It was seconded by

Commissioner Mortimer. The motion passed 5-0. Commissioner Mortimer asked when the FDLE is done and the ATF information is completed if they will get a final document. Mr. Mullins said yes.

Mayor Roberts asked for the attorney report. Attorney Walker said it is good to see you all again.

Mayor Roberts called for the commissioner reports.

Commissioner Nugent said the Northeast Florida League of Cities dinner is next Thursday at the Armory.

Commissioner Smith said with the growth on the corner of Weldon Street and 16 it would be great to start laying some groundwork for putting a light there. He asked Mr. Mullins to follow up on that.

Commissioner Mortimer had nothing further.

Commissioner Redding thanked Sheriff Smith for the exceptional level of professionalism and the wealth of information he has provided. He said he looks forward to good things out of you guys. Commissioner Mortimer said I'll ditto that.

Mayor Roberts had nothing further, so he entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Redding made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Commissioner Mortimer and the meeting was adjourned at 6:28 pm.