

Commission Meeting Minutes
June 18, 2024
5:30 pm

Mayor Roberts said before we begin the official meeting of the City of Starke 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 Mortimer will lead us in a prayer followed by the pledge.

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

This was the second regular meeting of the month. Members in attendance included Mayor Scott Roberts, Commissioner Janice D. Mortimer, Commissioner Danny Nugent, and Commissioner Shannon Smith. Also present were Operations Director Jimmy Crosby, Deputy Clerk Lisa Heeder, City Manager Drew Mullins and Captain Kevin Mueller. Commissioner Andy Redding was absent. Attorney Danielle Adams attended via Zoom.

Mayor Roberts said Commissioner Redding is not with us tonight with a prior commitment.

Mayor Roberts asked are there any additions or deletions to the agenda. Commissioner Mortimer said I want to add July 5th off for all staff under me. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve agenda with the change. It was seconded by Commissioner Mortimer. The motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Roberts said moving on to the consent agenda. He entertained a motion to approve the consent agenda. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion to approve the consent agenda. It was seconded by Commissioner Nugent. The motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Roberts said and now we're going to have a presentation by Amber Shepherd the economic development presentation. Welcome Amber. Amber Shepherd said thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to come and present the Northeast Florida Economic Development Corporation to you tonight. My name is Amber Shepperd. I'm the Strategic Alliance Business Partner with the organization. I also have with me tonight, Mrs. Sandra Kahle. She is our Board Chair and President of the organization as well. Mayor Roberts said if you don't mind, give just about a minute history of the organization that you're with, and that you're presenting so we'll have clarity on what you represent. Mrs. Shepherd said feel free to interject questions if you have them. Recognizing that economic development is a team effort and requires a significant amount of support and staff, there are plans to continue to grow the organization and the support that's offered within the organization. Initially, we started out with my role in the organization to come on and create the foundation. So, we've created the operational foundation, we've developed our customer relationship management database, we have also begun developing our website and some materials. I was focusing on the foundation of the organization. I have a long history of working in workforce

development. I actually worked for Fortis College and Everest University prior to that. I was the Director of Career Services of Fortis College for nine years and have been working in workforce development and career services for almost fifteen years. From there, I took an opportunity with a master's degree in human resources and started working in global executive management consulting, where I was able to build relationships with executive leaders across the globe and invite them to the United States, offering them support for localizing here in the United States. Some of our first clients were working with South Korea. They had some opportunities where they were trying to arrange meetings for businesses that were seeking to localize in the United States to identify those organizations that might be able to offer support to them as well as investment opportunities. Working with those organizations soon morphed into them asking our organization to provide support for creating opportunities to attract businesses to move to South Korea for manufacturing. As I was working with them, we also acquired an additional client in Washington DC, the Korean Business Development Center, who also works to bring organizations from South Korea to the United States. While I was working with them and looking at the work that we were doing, I considered my own community, because this is where I live. I thought what a great opportunity that's been presented to us. How do I get it to Florida. So, I've been seeking those opportunities as they've come available and developing relationships. I actually met Patricia Evans through a delegation coming to Florida in July of last year. I was bringing a group from the Korean Business Development Center that was interested in growing their agricultural bio supplement plant products to the United States and talking with them about manufacturing and suggested Florida as having a lot of opportunities. They came for a week. I introduced them to Mrs. Evans and introduced them to individuals in the community and that's where the ball got rolling for me and that opened up conversations with the board. I was on the board of directors but recognizing that we have a need for operational support and being limited on individuals who would be capable. I resigned from the board and took on the role of the Strategic Alliances Business Partner so that I can help create that foundation. I am a local small business owner. My husband has an organization here in our area. He's a home inspector and my family has lived in the area since 1984. So, I'm passionate about seeing our community succeed. On these next slides, we have our purpose and simply put, we're really working together to create innovation and opportunity here in Bradford County and the surrounding communities. Also, here is our mission and our vision. It's really focused on creating relationships, building those opportunities, enhancing our workforce and making sure that we are creating a legacy for our families and the generations to come to make sure that regardless of what goes on around us, our community is able to stand strong. Our three primary goals are to drive those robust public-private partnerships. We want to make sure that we are working collaboratively with all of the stakeholders in the community, making sure that we are getting input and output from our organization. I've partnered with Bradford County and I'm working with them to build a comprehensive strategic plan. We're hoping to receive CPTA grant funding for that and looking forward to hopefully having a launch of that project on July 12th. Second, we're focused on business expansion and innovation. We know that in the fourth industrial revolution

those technologies like smart vehicles, electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles, all the agriculture tech that's coming out, med tech that's coming out, we have an opportunity for that in our community. It's a matter of finding the organizations that are in alignment with the values of the community and finding a place that would be a good fit for them. Then we really are focused on elevating the community economic opportunity. This goal is so that all of the citizens of the community are going to be taken care of and have future opportunities to increase their own success for their families. So, we have been doing a lot of work and I have alluded to some of that on our website. Coming soon to our website is a site selector inventory list where we are working to identify properties that we can market actively and we have submitted Bradford County and City of Starke properties, not necessarily owned by the government entities, but we have submitted those properties to several RFPs. That is for the property added near the bypass owned by Osceola Land and Timber and it has the potential for organizations that we can reach out to with interest in moving to Florida and expanding. The two documents were provided through a grant through NFEDP. The consultant that prepared them does a lot of due diligence and creates good graphic designs so that the viewer will be able to easily understand the value of the property that they are looking at. We are attending economic development conferences around the state and we have joined multiple organizations to continue to add value and resources. Each one of the organizations adds benefits that the county can participate in and the city will also receive benefit from. So, we are growing and we are looking for sites. Ms. Kahle and I have been working diligently to identify sites and uploading them into our site selector inventory list so that the list is actually available on NFEDP's website. They want sites not just dirt and I will tell you that we made a fabulous connection with Madison Lawson from Florida Commerce. She shared with us that they are looking for buildings that they can repurpose. Those buildings that are not being utilized we've already begun submitting those to her so that she can be on the lookout for opportunities for us. We do need support and that comes in terms of collaboration and financial support. I have shared a copy of our investor application with our tiers of support. Those are not the upper limits. We are always willing to receive more, but those are the requirements for membership in the EDC. It really goes to an investment in our community. While doing a lot of operational day-to-day work, our board of directors is very active and involved. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you this evening. We do have some things coming up. July 7th through the 10th, we're planning a trip to Washington D C to request infrastructure support from Congresswoman Kat Kamak and Senator Rick Scott. I also hope to take our delegation to the Korean Venture Center, which is the new name for the KVDC group, and build that relationship with them while we're there, letting them know that we're ready to receive their businesses that are ready to expand in their manufacturing. July 12th, we are planning to host a collaborative kickoff strategy for the CPTA grant. Currently, we are working out the final details on that, but we would love to have the city manager and zoning and planning and potentially the highest elected official in the city, so that way we can have that collaborative conversation and begin the outline of our comprehensive strategic plan for economic development. On the 26th of September, we also will be attending a regional collaboration with the Gainesville

Chamber and Secretary Alex Kelly, so we have a lot of great networking opportunities that are coming up, and we have a lot of great opportunities with the grants that we're applying for and we have also been working with Chemours as they are seeking opportunities to invest in the community as well. Mayor Roberts said very good. Thank you. Mrs. Sheperd said do you have any questions. Commissioner Nugent said I just have two questions. If we come in as a government investor, which is \$10,000. Would we have input. Will we have some say as to what happens in our own community as the board. Are there other cities in the county involved with this yet or did you come to us first. Mrs. Shepherd said I came to you first. We have discussed that at our meetings. County Manager Scott Kornegay is in our meetings and we'd love for Mr. Mullins if he's available to attend, we can definitely have that availability with membership. Commissioner Nugent said maybe our mayor also, or one of our commissioners. Mrs. Shepherd said we can work those details out. We definitely want the City of Starke in the conversation. We want to make sure that we're able to be effective. That's the most important thing. So, a lot of times it does work better for the manager to be able to be there because that information goes directly back to employees that may be able to help affect those things but if there is a preference for the mayor I can take that to the board. Commissioner Smith said I think he was wanting to put one of us, if we did become a business partner, on the board. Mrs. Shepherd said that is an investor membership our board of directors is separate. I just want that clarified. They would be invited to conversation at the table, but it would not be a director seat. You would not have a vote at the board meetings but your input is highly valued. Mrs. Kahle said I'll try to explain why. This is a private enterprise, it's not a governmental enterprise, and we get into very touchy discussions trying to bring people here that we don't want other people to know about or they may be taking them to Clay County or up to Baker County or somewhere else. When it comes time to vote or to discuss items we're going to be voting on, then we ask everybody to leave except for the board of directors. And the board of directors is all volunteers. They're not getting paid by anybody to be there. It's very important to be able to protect things up to a certain point until you can announce them. That's why we don't have elected officials sitting on board. Commissioner Mortimer said it looks like we're all focusing on the board membership and the ability to have some type of impact but I didn't see any diversity in your board membership. I understand that prior to you coming on board and when the governor's legislation was passed, the bill was passed, it did away with our group. Mrs. Kahle said I had just started going to the BCDA meetings in January of 2023. Commissioner Mortimer said the acronym you're using is Bradford County Development Authority. That was governmental. Mrs. Kahle said it was an arm of Bradford County, so it was in the sunshine, so I could sit there and listen to everything, but as they were going towards having to dissolve it, they needed to set up the new entity, and for some reason, they selected me and two other people, Avery Roberts and Evan Douglas, to be the new directors of the new corporation. Commissioner Mortimer said the county selected you. Mrs. Kahle said we volunteered. We were asked if we would do it and we volunteered to do it. The county didn't select us. The BCDA could not get involved until the new entity was dissolved which was June 30th I believe. We had to have three directors to set it up. So, we came in with three directors

and I started setting up the corporation and that type of thing and the bylaws and the articles and so on. Then as soon as June 30th came then the others came back in. Commissioner Mortimer said that's totally understandable and I follow you but my question basically is that I did not see any diversity in your board membership. Mrs. Kahle said we started out with who was there, who had experience, and there was no diversity on that board besides females and so we have been adding people and we have just recently elected new members, and one of those was Dawn Strickland. We're trying to pick up ones from outside private corporations that can bring power and influence and help us get this thing rolling. So, that has been it up to there, but we're still identifying board members and bringing more on. We have to have a minimum of eight, which we've been maintaining, but we can go up higher than that. We're going to be adding board members, we're selecting them, interviewing them now, and looking at that. So, if you've got a great candidate. Commissioner Mortimer said I do. Mrs. Kahle said you can let me know. Commissioner Mortimer said I'll talk to you after the meeting. Mayor Roberts said thank you. I appreciate you all. For a long time there has been a passion for economic development in our community. We will probably have another meeting to discuss becoming part of a membership.

Mayor Roberts said there is no old business and no emergency items. I have no cards for any public participation. I will read it in case there is someone that may come up. 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 and 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. There was no citizen participation.

Mayor Roberts called for the first reading of Ordinance Number 2024-15. Attorney Adams said this is Ordinance Number 2024-15, an ordinance of the City of Starke, Florida calling for a referendum question to be placed before the qualified electors of the City of Starke at the next general election, which is scheduled for Tuesday, November 5, 2024; providing charter referendum questions determining whether to adopt the proposed amendments to the charter for the City of Starke; providing for the full text of the proposed amended charter for the City of Starke; providing for all requisite ballot language; providing for repeal of all conflicting ordinances; providing for severability and providing for an effective date. Mr. Mayor, I'd be happy to provide a brief overview of this if it's the will of the Commission. Mayor Roberts said go ahead. Attorney Adams said so essentially on the second page you'll see the number one charter amendment. E ssentially what you're doing here tonight is approving the ballot language that will appear before the qualified electors to either approve or deny the removal of the role of the city chief of police, the city police department, and their respective powers as referenced in the charter as it sits. So, by voting to adopt this ordinance, you're adopting

the ballot language. Mayor Roberts asked for questions. There were none. Mayor Roberts said you have heard the reading of Ordinance 2024-15. I will open it up for any questions. There were no questions. Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-15 on read first reading. Commissioner Smith made a motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Mortimer. Commissioner Smith said Mr. Milner has a question. Mayor Roberts said OK. Bob Milner said thank you very much. First of all I'm privileged to run unopposed. The only thing I ask you to consider. I don't have empirical scientific data, but I have researched this in the past in those cities and counties that utilize mail in ballots only for non-candidate issues, which by Florida law you can do. They have a significantly higher return rate of turnout of voters. Now this is just me, you will get people who are strongly for it and those are strongly against it. To me, no matter how it goes, I think we can agree what we want is the highest turnout possible so it is a more pure reflection of the feelings and desires of the majority of citizens and I can almost assure you it's going to be a low turnout with the exception of those that are strongly opposed or strongly for unless all they have to do is put a stamp on it and send it back in. So, I hope you consider it. Mayor Roberts said thank you. Commissioner Mortimer said do you know what the cost would be. Would it be handled in house because we have been contracting with the supervisor elections to handle all of our elections. Mr. Milner said if it's done by mail it will be done in-house by us. And if it's done by them, we will pay them the cost for putting it on the ballot and having it out there. I think the cost would probably be equal. Commissioner Mortimer said Mr. Mayor with all due respect. I totally understand Mr. Miller's opinion but I'm in favor of us just going ahead and doing it the way that it is stated in this ordinance, because it is going to be a big turnout for the presidential election. Attorney Adams said if I if I may, vote by mail is still an option for the general election, it would just be done through the county. Commissioner Mortimer said you're right if you're on the vote by mail list then you will get it by mail. Mayor Roberts said in my opinion if it was the city doing it by itself, I think the vote by mail might hold a little more weight. Mayor Roberts called for a vote. The motion passed 3-1. Commissioner Nugent opposed the motion.

Mayor Roberts said moving on to the city manager's report. Mr. Mullins apologized for missing the last meeting because his car broke down.

Mayor Roberts said moving on to the law enforcement report.

Captain Mueller said since this is the second meeting of the month I won't spend your time unless you have any questions or comments. I'm always here if there is anything that you need. Mayor Roberts said we appreciate it. Commissioner Mortimer said good job catching that escapee today. Thank you for keeping us safe.

Mayor Roberts asked for the attorney's report. Attorney Adams thanked the commissioners for allowing her to attend by Zoom.

Mayor Roberts asked for the commissioner reports. Commissioner Nugent said The Northeast Florida League of Cities dinner is Thursday night and it starts at 5:30 pm in

Orange Park.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Mullins for an update on the used car lot we have out there. I know you said we're having some issues. When we get that up and running, please, let's get it out to the public so we can get these cars out of the parking lot. Mr. Mullins said all the problems are resolved as of today with websites, so they'll be added this week. Commissioner Smith said let's do it on our website to let them know that the cars are out there ready to go. Also, it is summertime and the kids are out running around. Keep an eye on our parks, please. This is the time of year we always get some vandalism. Thank you for all you do.

Commissioner Mortimer said the Fourth of July is on Thursday so Friday, July 5th I'd like for us to consider giving our employees that day off. She asked if they can afford to do it. Mr. Mullins said yes. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion that we give our employees July 5th off as a holiday. It was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion passed 4-0.

Commissioner Mortimer said the Florida pension conference starts this weekend and I will be going and several of our general employee board members are attending. It should be a pretty good conference this year. Hopefully we'll bring back some information to our boards that will help enhance our employee pensions.

Mayor Roberts entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mortimer made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Commissioner Smith. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:13 pm.