

# City of Bowling Green

## Minutes of Regular Meeting

December 14, 2021

Present: Mayor Gardner, Vice-Mayor Fite, Commissioner Durastanti, Commissioner Lunn, Commissioner Jones, City Manager Thompson, City Clerk Silva, Utility Billing Specialist Torres, Attorney Buhr, and members of the audience.

Absent: Chief Scheel

1. **Call to order** – The meeting was called to order by Mayor Gardner.

2. **Prayer** – Commissioner Durastanti  
Flag Salute

3. **Old Business**

**A. Approval of Minutes**

1) **Regular Meeting 11/09/2021**

Commissioner Durastanti made a motion to approve. Motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Fite. Roll call vote, all in favor, motion carried.

**B. AT&T Lease**

City Manager Thompson mentioned the proposal received for the AT&T lease of the water tower for \$575,000 for 99 years. The City did not agree with the proposal. Mr. Thompson reached out to the company and they came back with a different proposal for 40 years. It is disingenuous to the City. He is looking for direction from the Commission on which direction they would like to go. Vice-Mayor Fite made a motion to let this proposal go. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Lunn. Roll call vote, all in favor, motion carried.

4. **New Business**

**A. FDOT Presentation**

Deborah Chesnea, Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Coordinator for FDOT, gave a presentation on the "RRR" project. She mentioned that she is working with Central Florida Regional Planning Council on the City's Master Plan. She stated that the City must have a Vision Plan to be able to apply for a grant with the Department of Equal Opportunity. It would be for planning and technical assistance. Commissioner Jones asked if the grant would be free and clear or if there would be a match. Stephanie of CFRPC stated that she did not know but that she would find out. Vice-Mayor Fite mentioned that CFRPC would be doing the work so the grant would be pretty much to fund them. He asked if they addressed and took in to consideration the speed notification signs. Ms. Chesnea replied that they did. The lighting in the "RRR" project would be at the intersections and all other lighting would fall under the Master Plan. Commissioner Lunn mentioned that he decided over the Thanksgiving holidays to not take the interstates and went through dozens of towns instead. He stated that virtually all of the towns, if not all of them, went down to 35 MPH or below. He suggested slowing traffic down within the City limits.

## B. Project Updates - Pennoni

Steve Elias with Pennoni gave an update that Bowling Green was recently awarded a \$15.2 million 100% grant for a septic to sewer project and to take the next step to convert the treatment plant to public access reuse. He stated that Pennoni wanted to write a case study on Bowling Green because they are pushing \$30 million in grant money in the last 8-10 years. Mayor Gardner stated that he had some concerns about the \$133,000 that the City has to pay for the last project with SWFWMD. He asked what it is going to cost the City out-of-pocket yearly to do this project. Roger Homann with Pennoni responded that it is a 100% grant funded project. Mayor Gardner stated that he is not concerned about the grant, that he wants to know what it is going to cost the City because they were told the same thing last time and with this someone told them that it is going to cost the City about \$30,000-\$50,000 a year to run this plant that is not going to be used. City Manager Thompson stated that when they mention 100% free, that there is nothing 100% free. He stated that this \$15.2 million grant is going to cost the City around \$30,000-\$50,000 a year to keep up with including auditing. He mentioned that what Mayor Gardner wanted to know was the overall cost to the City going forward once the project is completed. Roger Homann commented that they are going to get an equal plant to what the City has now plus additional filters and inspection. He stated that if it is run as public reuse there will be additional costs to the City. He stated that the idea was to run the system as they currently are and have additional capacity. Attorney Buhr asked what the plans for the public reuse were since the City does not have any huge subdivisions coming in that will use reclaimed water. He asked if the grant would include running pipes for the reuse. He stated that the City would have public access reuse but for what good. Steve Elias of Pennoni stated that this would be a 4-5 step process and this would be like step 4 of the process. He stated that for now, they are correct and that making the public reuse available would require additional staffing, requirements, and other expenses. Mayor Gardner stated that it would just cost the City for it just to sit there since they still have auditors to audit the grant. City Manager Thompson stated that it would cost the City electric and what may be. He stated that having pumps or whatever, that they still have to be used or run to make sure it keeps operating correctly. He stated that his concern is the cost to maintain 5-10 years down the road. He stated that the City is in a contract right now and the company is not going to do it for free. He stated that he just wants to make sure that whatever is being built is something that the City can afford and take care of in 5-6 years. He mentioned that building a plant is going to cost you to just have it sit there since it still has to be cleaned, etc. Those are costs to the City and the word "free" is being thrown around when nothing is really free. He wants to know what it is going to cost the City once it is done. Steve Elias responded that they were not prepared tonight to answer the question with an exact dollar amount. He stated that the costs for electric are usually on a per gallon basis. He mentioned the DEP requirement for man hours. Attorney Buhr stated that it would be higher. He stated that if it is just going to sit there and not be used as public access reuse then it might not change. Steve Elias with Pennoni responded that it would not be used as public access reuse. Attorney Buhr mentioned that DEP could take it upon themselves to rerate the plant. Steve Elias mentioned the requirements for MOSAIC. He stated that this would at minimum improve the water quality. Attorney Buhr stated that he was concerned for more than just the water quality. He mentioned consistency and reliability. Attorney Buhr told Pennoni that he appreciates the work they have done but that the City really needs to be able to afford to run it. He mentioned the fixed costs associated with the new plant. Steve Elias then stated that it would not be free, that there

will be extra costs for maintenance, but that he is not sure of what that would be. He stated that it would build more capacity. Mayor Gardner asked how much capacity it has now. Attorney Buhr mentioned ERC's. Roger Homann gave an estimated capacity. Attorney Buhr mentioned the utility feasibility study. City Manager Thompson stated that his only concern is moving forward. He stated that the City is economically challenged and the new water and sewer plant are costing around half a million dollars to run both plants. He stated that he does not have extra money to pay to have it sitting there. He said nothing is free and just getting the grants costs the City around \$30,000-\$40,000. Vice-Mayor Fite questioned Mr. Thompson's comment on the costs. Mr. Thompson then explained to Vice-Mayor Fite the costs associated with grants including single audits costs and administrative costs for the grant administration. He stated that the City could not afford to add anything new right now, whether it is going to benefit them or not, that is not for immediate use. He stated that he is not okay with putting this burden on the taxpayers. Steve Elias mentioned the septic to sewer part of the grant. He mentioned the amount of revenue the City could receive from that. Attorney Buhr commented that as long as it is concentrated on areas and not spread around the City. City Manager Thompson stated that there is not a 100% grant that would pay for the piping anyways from the new plant. He stated that the City has two generators that need replacing and that he is spending \$1,500.00 to repair one and cutting something else from the budget. He stated that he could apply for some through a grant through Hardee County Emergency Management but that the City can not afford to pay the \$25,000.00 to pay for its 25% share of the grant. He stated that the City is currently band-aiding everything. He mentioned that nothing is free and the residents are the ones paying for it. He stated that if it would save taxpayers money then he would be up for it, but it is not, it is costing them. Steve Elias stated that the specific grant was to improve water quality. He mentioned that this grant is 100% at least for the construction. Attorney Buhr stated that it is a great thing but that what the City needs most is a reliable disposal area, that way they are out of the Mosaic situation. City Manager Thompson mentioned the effluent line project and how it is costing the City about \$2,000.00 a month to send it down to Wauchula. Roger Homann mentioned that the grant could possibly help pay for some of the fees that were mentioned. Attorney Buhr stated some effluent disposal options. Steve Elias mentioned that better water quality could open up more options. Attorney Buhr commented that it doesn't matter how good you make it, that you could make it drinking water quality, DEP is still going to look at it as sewage water. Disposal should be the number one priority. City Manager Thompson commented that the costs to run both plants has gone up and that the City barely breaks even every year. Attorney Buhr stated that legally septic to sewer takes about a year and is not free either. Vice-Mayor Fite stated that this is putting the collection system in. Attorney Buhr asked if it was from their home. Steve Elias mentioned a couple of streets. City Manager Thompson stated that he is on board with that project. City Manager Thompson mentioned the almost \$3 million loan.

### **C. Chester Street Property**

City Manager Thompson stated that he spoke to the housing authority lawyer today and that the plan was that the property was deeded to the City to partner with Habitat for Humanity to build low to moderate income housing. He stated that the problem is that the entire project needs to be completed in 1 ½ years. There is no way that Habitat could build 26 or whatever houses on the property, building as they sell, and get it completed in time. The land would then revert back to the housing authority. He stated that they will be

meeting to go over their audit and he is being placed on the agenda to go before their board to see if there is a way to extend, sell, give, grant to the City, etc. He asked the Commission for direction. Mayor Gardner made a motion to allow City Manager Thompson to go before their board to see if they would allow the City to sell it or see what other options. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Lunn. Roll call vote, all in favor, motion carried.

**D. State Revolving Fund Loans**

City Manager Thompson stated that the City received a loan payment notice for a loan that was signed back in 2019. It is for 40 payments of \$68,448.00 which comes out to around \$133,000.00 a year. He stated that a budget amendment will be needed to include this expense and that he had to go ahead and make that payment since he is required by law. He asked the Commission to approve using the money in reserves to make the payment. Commissioner Jones asked how many times a year and for how many years the amount of \$68,448.00 needs to be paid. City Manager Thompson replied that it gets paid bi-annually and for 20 years. He stated that the total comes out to be \$2,737,600.00. Commissioner Jones stated that he asked because he wanted to show how this was a grant that then turns in to a loan. City Manager Thompson commented that this would make about five SRF Loans for the City. He stated that this amount is going to hurt the City for the next 20 years. He stated that this money could have instead been used to pay for 3 officers' benefits and salary, 6 regular employees, it could buy a new boom truck, 15 backhoes, etc. He stated that he is going to cut costs wherever he can this year. He mentioned moving over the \$40,000-\$50,000 in impact fees to help pay for some of this since it has to do with wastewater. He stated that there will be no new police car next year. He stated that the City's garbage truck is in the shop right now and it's going to cost the City about \$5,000.00. He stated that they were driving around and the muffler fell off. He mentioned that although the City is getting a new garbage truck, they are saving the smaller one as a backup. Commissioner Jones commented that all of this is a result of people thinking that grants are all free. City Manager Thompson stated that the City paid around \$6,000.00 about a month ago to get all of the generators reserviced. Commissioner Jones made a motion to allow Mr. Thompson to use the money in reserves to make the loan payment. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Durastanti. Roll call vote, all in favor, motion carried.

**E. Christmas Project – Emmanuel Reed**

Nikki Reed of Lakeland was present representing Greater Macedonia Church. She asked permission to use the Harrington-Liston Park for caroling on Tuesday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:45pm. City Manager Thompson asked if it was the park on Martin Luther King. Mrs. Reed replied that it was. Vice-Mayor Fite made a motion to allow. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Jones. Roll call vote, all in favor, motion carried.

**5. Mayor Gardner**

Mayor Gardner stated that they had a pretty good time last weekend with the Christmas event. He stated that everyone really needs to get on track with what's going on, catching up, and paying attention a little more.

**6. Recreation Committee**

Chiquita Robinson, Chair of the Recreation Committee, stated that they had a good turnout and the parade was good. She stated that everyone liked the idea of crossing Highway 17. Mayor Gardner asked if it should be in an ordinance to make a permanent parade route.

Attorney Buhr stated that it can be done by resolution if they would like to establish a permanent route. Mayor Gardner stated that they just didn't want any confusion. Ms. Robinson thanked the City, the workers, Chief, and the Commissioners that showed up. She stated that the next event would be in February. She asked anyone that would like to join the Committee to come on board because some of her people have fallen to the wayside. Commissioner Jones asked for meeting dates and times. Ms. Robinson responded that they meet on the Mondays before the Commission meetings beginning around 5-5:30pm in the Commission Chambers. She mentioned that Feeding Tampa Bay will not be back until the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday in January.

#### **7. Commissioners**

Commissioner Jones stated that he enjoyed the City's parade and the participation in Wauchula's parade. He mentioned that they used two golf carts, gave out candy, and had fun. He stated that the City has the permission to cross Highway 17 but that if the participation increases to where they can not make the 15 minute window, they will have to go back to DOT after meeting with the Commission to vote on the route. He stated that Chief and his staff did a wonderful job. He stated that he was grateful for City Manager Thompson. He stated that there is a certification for \$99 that he would like to obtain as a new commissioner. He asked the Commission if they would approve him attending. The training is through the Florida League of Cities. Vice-Mayor Fite asked which training it was. Commissioner Jones stated that it was for the Newly Elected Officials. Vice-Mayor Fite commented that he thought they were doing it for free. City Clerk Silva responded that they are not and that the charge is \$99. Vice-Mayor Fite made a motion to approve Commissioner Jones request. Mayor Gardner seconded the motion. Roll call vote, all in favor, motion carried. Commissioner Durastanti stated that Christmas was the best time of the year. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Vice-Mayor Fite echoed what Commissioner Durastanti said. He encouraged everyone to help the less fortunate or those in need. He stated that the City has received many compliments on the Christmas lights on Highway 17. He stated that he hopes to see everyone at the Christmas party on Friday and wished everyone safe travels and a Happy New Year. Commissioner Lunn apologized for not showing up to some of the events. He stated that his wife was out of town and had to adjust. He stated that the Christmas lights in the City are very pretty. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

#### **8. City Attorney**

Attorney Buhr wished everyone a Merry Christmas and stated that he will see everyone on Friday.

#### **9. City Manager**

City Manager Thompson stated that the City still owes the contractor \$244,437.00 that will be reimbursed. He stated that normally it is paid out of the line of credit but that it usually takes 2-3 months to get the reimbursement and it will cost the City to use this method. He suggested paying out of the Enterprise Fund and then reimburse it but that he will pay it out of the line of credit if that is what the Commission wants. Commissioner Durastanti, Mayor Gardner, and Commissioner Jones stated that it should get paid out of the Enterprise Fund saving them around \$1,400.00 instead of using the line of credit. City Manager Thompson then mentioned impact fees. He stated that it is becoming disingenuous to some of the customers. He mentioned a lady that owned a home for seven years and she just came back and had to be charged the impact fees to turn her water back on. He asked for a motion to put a stop to it in order to make some changes or stop it all together. He mentioned raising tap fees instead. He stated that the tap fees help pay the employees and supplies for tapping in to the lines. He stated that they would be under

\$2,000.00 making it manageable for most people. Attorney Buhr stated that impact fees have to be recovery costs and not income producing. He recommended that the City not do taps and have the customer get a plumber to do the work. He stated that then the City could charge an inspection fee and have someone inspect it to make sure it is done right. He stated that then the manpower could be used somewhere else. Vice-Mayor Fite asked Attorney Buhr and City Manager Thompson to discuss this and then bring it back before the Commission. City Manager asked if they would vote on suspending the impact fees. The Commission said no. Mayor Gardner asked Attorney Buhr for his advice. Attorney Buhr stated that the impact fees are what pay for the future plant, and major mains. City Manager Thompson commented on the issue of charging the lady \$3,500.00 just to turn her water back on after being gone for some years. Attorney Buhr explained that the owner was not paying the base charge but fixed costs still have to get paid. He explained that although the owner is gone, the City is holding those services and capacity for them. So after being gone for so long they are considered more like new customers. City Manager Thompson commented that the lady stated that if she would have known how much it was she would've just brought her trailer down and moved in to Pioneer Creek. Commissioner Durastanti mentioned that impact fees are not charged when customers are cut off and then turned back on. City Manager Thompson responded that the house has sat vacant for more than 5 years and that is why the City had to charge an impact fee. Attorney Buhr stated that it was 5 years of them not paying a minimum charge. He said there are costs associated with operating the plant. He mentioned that the impact fee could be lowered but that he does not recommend doing away with it. He also mentioned that some bond covenants may be tied to an impact fee as they require an income stream. Commissioner Jones stated that the customer owned a home, left for 5 years, and has now come back to the City. He stated that she is just catching up on her water bill. He stated that the house has been there and everyone else has been paying their water bills, so it is as if she is catching up on her bill. City Manager Thompson mentioned the annexations. He stated that he has been with the City for three months now and that he enjoyed the parade on Saturday. He stated that he walked the parade and met a lot of people. He stated that it wasn't as big as the Trunk-or-Treat event but that he sees great things here. He mentioned how people of different races were all standing together and how important unity is and getting people together. He stated that he was at a meeting the other day and he heard someone say that Bowling Green was dying. He said that he does not see that, that he did not see that during Halloween and he doesn't see it now or going forward. He mentioned the possibility of getting a convenience store across the street. He stated that it was important for the community to come together.

**10. Police Chief**

Not present.

**11. City Clerk**

Nothing to discuss.

**12. Public**

Teresa and her husband Lance, owners of the Bowling Green Small Engine, thanked everyone for the past years. She stated that one of the reasons for the retirement is her husband's health and that it is now time for something new. Mr. Lindsey of Church Street stated that he has the Pyatt Park reserved for January 8<sup>th</sup> for his son's birthday. He stated that they will be having music which will end before dark. They will have around 50 people present. He asked for a noise waiver. Mayor Gardner stated that he did not have an issue with it. Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve which was seconded by Vice-Mayor Fite. Roll call vote, all in favor, motion carried.

**Mayor Gardner adjourned the meeting.**

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**Duane Gardner, Mayor**

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**Maria Carmen Silva, City Clerk**

CITY OF BOWLING GREEN



AGENDA REQUEST

Name Veronica Narvaez

Address 423 Sellers St., Bowling Green, FL 33834

Phone (Contact Information) (863) 399-0825

Date 01/4/2022

Purpose of Request Converting residential property to commercial for day care center. Our current center is located at 423 Sellers St. in Bowling Green and we are looking to relocate.

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Signature 