



**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**CITY OF NEW PORT RICHEY**

NEW PORT RICHEY CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
5919 MAIN STREET, NEW PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA

February 4, 2025

4:00 PM

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**ORDER OF  
BUSINESS**

1 Call to Order - Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Chopper Davis at 4:00 p.m. Those in attendance were Deputy Mayor Kelly Mothershead, Councilwoman Matt Murphy, Councilman Peter Altman and Councilman Bertell Butler, IV.

Also in attendance were City Manager Debbie L. Manns, City Clerk Judy Meyers, Finance Director Crystal Dunn, Fire Chief Chris Fitch, Public Works Director Robert Rivera, Police Chief Bob Kochen, Library Director Andi Figart, Community & Development Director Dale Hall, Asst. Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Trapp, Technology Solutions Director Leanne Mahadeo, and Human Resources Director Arnel Wetzell.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

2 Legislative Roundtable Discussion - Page 2

Mayor Davis stated the purpose of this work session was to conduct an open roundtable discussion on topics of importance to each Council member. Each Council member was asked to submit discussion topics. The topics that were received are as follows below:

Topics to be introduced by Councilman Murphy:

- Infrastructure Rehab

Councilman Murphy stated he is looking for the city to continue its investment. Mayor Davis asked if there were ways for the city team to communicate. Councilman Murphy stated any projects we have with infrastructure that are old we need to focus on repairing them. City Manager Manns stated that we do have a plan as well as contingencies for repairs that are unexpected. Councilman Altman stated that in the sense of infrastructure and rehab there has been a substantial amount of money that has been dumped into Pasco County. He stated transportation is infrastructure as well. He stated that we really need to take advantage of that. Deputy Mayor Mothershead stated if we did tie it in to something tourist related we could bring in the Sports Coast. Councilman Altman

spoke briefly about the north boat ramp project. He stated it has to have an economic tie to it. Deputy Mayor Mothershead stated the bike trail brings in tourism. Councilman Altman then spoke briefly about the coast to coast trail. Councilman Murphy stated that economic development looks good but you have to have the basics. Councilman Butler stated he agrees with connecting the trail to Pinellas. He stated his big thing is flood infrastructure and road dieting along with the beautification of U.S. 19. He stated infrastructure is a very broad category. He stated we allocated funds for a concrete mixer but he stated this will not be happening this budget cycle and would like to know when Council will be notified of changes as they were in the approved budget. He stated we made a plan but it is not be implemented.

- **Septic Systems Conversions**

Councilman Murphy stated there is money available and he was going to have our lobbyist look into programs. He stated it is important for our environment. Deputy Mayor Mothershead asked about the golf cart crossing at Marine Parkway. Mr. Rivera stated the asphalt hot box was submitted in the first draft of the budget and was removed in the second draft. Councilman Butler stated he made note it was important in the first draft. He would like to have a summary provided. Mr. Rivera stated typically we do let Council know when large items are removed. Mr. Rivera stated the next Council meeting will have a street projects item which includes improvements needed before FDOT approves the crossing. Mayor Davis asked about Main Street and City Manager Manns stated FDOT is not considering it at this time. She stated FDOT does not believe conditions there warrant a crossing. Mr. Rivera stated we focused our energy on the two intersections that were approved. He stated FDOT would reconsider the matter in a couple of years.

- **Flooding - specifically programs for homeowners to be able to afford elevating if needed.**

Councilman Murphy stated as a city it is hard for us to make a dent in it we need help from the State and Federal governments. He stated the amount of money that is out there compared to what was flooded is nothing. He suggested a grant or low-interest loan to one or two recipients a year to help with the rebuild. Mayor Davis asked if we could do a better job informing the public and Councilman Murphy agreed. Deputy Mayor Mothershead stated getting more information out about the resources perhaps through a neighborhood workshop where representatives can help explain programs that are available. City Manager Manns stated attendance varied on the neighborhood. She stated it is a benefit to have a session especially since the substantial letters have been sent. Councilman Altman stated today through the weekend the hardware store on Grand will have FEMA reps there for commercial advice. He stated the people always appreciate it when the city sends them to the right place. City Manager Manns stated that staff tries to keep up on the resources and to push it out to the public. She stated though there is a lag time with disbursements. She stated some are still waiting on help from Idalia.

Topics to be introduced by Councilman Altman:

- **City's current staffing strategy as it relates to succession planning and the division of responsibilities.**

Councilman Altman stated he is excited to have conversations with his colleagues and it is helpful to have people here who can answer questions. He stated his observation of the city and how its operating is a lack of progress on how long things take. He stated the Governor's budget includes 25% in salaries. He stated when you don't percolate your department heads and intelligent quotient up through city staff and we can't keep people. He cited Barret Doe as an example. He stated we have to be careful in our spending of the General Fund and then spoke about the City Manager headhunting for Dade City. He stated we have to be

realistic and prepared for sticker shock. He stated as a Council when we have to face the music we need to put our resources into our staff and training. Councilman Altman stated he is advocating for the City Manager to do what she needs to do. We may have to hire multiple people to fill roles. City Manager Manns stated we will never be able to compete with Pasco County and that is why we have lost key employees. She stated when we implemented our market study we have made considerable gains to make sure we are paying market and have made great strides in what we pay department heads. She stated we are in a better position now to recruit and retain employees. Councilman Butler spoke about the economic development and development director. He stated he wanted to add that the school board offers a quarterly staffing update. He stated he would like to see what programs we have in place and how many people are using them. Councilman Butler spoke about educational investment. He spoke about losing people who did not have the educational level. He stated if we can't pay them more we can invest in their education. Councilman Altman stated it is important to hire those who are eager to learn. Deputy Mayor Mothershead spoke about the educational assistance at a former employer and how the reimbursement was much more successful.

- Council's role in the selection of professional providers for capital projects and the continued role of the City Council in the development of plans to include Master Plans, the Budget and proposed ordinances.

Councilman Altman stated that he floated the idea out that he saw in some of the RFP's for bigger projects they had a board/council member on the grading team. He stated it is not just to make sure it is happening correctly but to demonstrate that we are part of the capital improvement. He stated if he was part of the selection he would be more vocal on the dais. He spoke regarding the Council work session for the improvements to the Gloria Swanson lot as an example. He then spoke about parking on Montana Avenue. Mayor Davis stated if the City Manager lets us know what projects are coming up you can always attend the interviews as they are open to the public and council can sit in on them. Councilman Butler stated his fear is it turning into a delay. He stated he did not want that to cause an issue when a workshop needs to be scheduled. He stated he liked the idea of popping in as a non-voting member. Councilman Altman stated input may fall under the interference provision. He stated there are other opportunities. He spoke about Allen Biddlecomb and the inundation pond project RFP. He stated there are solutions that can address concerns. He stated ultimately when the project is done it is our project. He stated it is worth it to him to be in on the discussion of the project. Councilman Murphy spoke about the possible reconfiguration so it did not take up as much real estate. He stated if there is something you are passionate about get involved. Councilman Altman stated it is important to share projects with each other.

- The prioritization of efforts to advance the projects and programs approved and measures to evaluate the successes and failures to perform the CRA Plan.

Councilman Altman stated the when the public sees us do something like plants or the overhead sign, it's critical that people understand we have to use that money to improve the economics of the city. He stated there are several projects right now that when turned around will put money back in our pockets. He stated we should be hiring a firm to complete the annual report since there is no economic director at the moment. He told City Manager Manns he wants her to see the great things being done by the Planning Council. Councilman Altman stated he wants to stimulate the minds of the community and then see what we can do. He stated those conversations require agendas to be prepared. He stated Dade City has been looking for over six months for a CRA Director. He stated a consultant can assist us on a temporary basis. He stated whatever is needed for us to produce. He stated it is important to see what is a priority.

Although Councilman Butler did not submit his topics before the deadline, Mayor Davis allowed for him to speak regarding communication between Council and the City Manager. Councilman Butler stated the trash tax is a perfect example and we are making an up or down option of putting it on the tax bill and he would have preferred options. He stated the recommendations are putting us in a box. Mayor Davis stated the solid waste decision was made by Council not the City Manager. He stated what Council voted on was not working. Councilman Butler spoke about the incentives for Aqua Harbor and picking what would work and would not work. Councilman Altman stated the City Manager speaks to all of Council and then present the options. He stated if he has something to speak to her about he does and she will render a professional opinion. Mayor Davis stated staff does the research to Council and then it is Council's decision. Councilman Altman stated he is looking at holding the City Manager accountable for her performance and it should come collectively and not individually. Mayor Davis stated we all come with our own minds. Deputy Mayor Mothershead stated it is staff's job to do the research and make the recommendations on what is best for the city. She stated our job is not to do their job. It is to take their recommendations under consideration. She stated she believes in our staff. Councilman Butler stated he would like to see options. He stated it would lead to a more collaborative conversation. Councilman Altman spoke about the special meeting in February with the solid waste resolutions. He stated the best advice is for her to give a background. He stated there seems to be a missing step. He stated he is ok with putting the outstanding balances on the tax roll but stated moving forward we have time to find a better option. Councilman Butler stated he needed to know what the other Council is thinking ahead of time instead of waiting for the item presented at the dais. He suggested adding language to the agenda memo. Councilman Murphy stated the purpose of setting the meeting is to meet the tax collector deadline but the discussion will happen at the time the item is presented. Mayor Davis stated he has done his research by visiting the businesses and suggested Councilman Butler do the same. Councilman Murphy stated sometimes he has been swayed to change his mind after the discussion by Council. Mayor Davis stated he listens to the other four opinions.

3 Adjournment

There being no further business to consider, upon proper motion, the meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

\_\_\_\_\_ (signed)

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

Judy Meyers, MMC, City Clerk