

THE CITY OF WEST MELBOURNE
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2005

5:30 PM

I. ROLL CALL

Mayor Willmarth called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silent meditation.

Present were:

Mayor Bob Willmarth
Deputy Mayor Hal Rose
Council Member Duke Salberg
Council Member Andrew Jones
Council Member Karrie Delaney
Council Member Virginia Blanchard

Absent was:

Council Member Kathy Lane

CLERKS' NOTE: No motion was made to excuse the absence.

II. 2005-2006 PROPOSED BUDGET

City Manager Mark Ryan introduced and summarized the proposed Council budget from the previous Budget Hearing of September 12, 2005, of \$25,775,050.00 with \$550,000.00 for roads. He summarized each department, their requested acquisitions, and the proposed funding requests. City Manager Ryan also explained each additional fund such as Recreation Fund, Stormwater Utility Fund, Capital Improvement Construction Fund, Water and Sewer Operating Fund, Capital Fees Trust Fund, Wastewater Reuse Fund, Sewer Capital Improvement Grant Fund, and the Ray Bullard Water Reclamation Facility Expansion. City Manager Ryan reviewed the municipal millage rate. He explained that a home with an assessed value of \$200,000.00 on the 'worst case scenario' millage rate of 2.918, required by the state, the homeowner would pay \$510.65 a year. He stated that when revised in August to a millage rate of 2.731, a home at \$200,000.00 would equal \$477.93, again revised on September 12 to a millage rate of 1.9344, a home of \$200,000.00 assessed value would cost the homeowner and generate for the city \$338.52 a year, for a total of \$ 1.8 million in property tax revenue.

Mayor Willmarth thanked City Manager Ryan and staff for their hard-work and revisions.

Mayor Willmarth opened the public hearing.

Mr. Jimmy Balough, 671 John Hancock Lane, West Melbourne, stated that he believes the elected officials are not doing their job and are not doing anything for the citizens. He stated that he holds the City Manager and lackadaisical employees for everything that has happened in the city such as exploded growth and increased demands on the City and employees.

Ms. Jeanette Gross, Heritage Oaks, requested the cost of police vehicles and asked how often they are used and replaced. She questioned why the taxation is not a public vote issue.

Mayor Willmarth explained why the Council has the sole responsibility to establish a millage rate, given to them by the state.

Ms. Gross asked why the charter does not have to be changed in order for the residents to be taxed.

Mayor Willmarth stated that State Statute overrules any charter in effect, and the city cannot amend the charter to interfere with the formula to establish the millage rate. He stated that, in the past, there was sufficient revenue until a couple of years ago when the city began dipping into the reserves.

An audience member asked if it was illegal to put the tax up for a public vote.

Mayor Willmarth stated that it was not illegal, and he could only place it up for a public opinion poll and that it would not be binding on any Council decision. He stated that, in addition, it would cost several thousands of dollars which could result in a higher tax rate. Mayor Willmarth answered an audience member, stating that the reason the operating budget keeps going up is because expenses keep going up, and due to the fact that the city has never established a millage rate. He explained that the state gave the City this mechanism to raise money to operate the city, and the City has not used it for the past twenty years and if they had, there would be plenty of funds in the reserve and the City could reduce the tax as other cities have done this year.

Mr. Doug Taylor, 708 Samuel Chase Lane, West Melbourne, asked about the stormwater bond. He stated that he feels the City does not need to expand city hall, the City needs more police, better roads, and salary increases for all employees, not just department heads.

Mayor Willmarth explained why the City needs to expand the wastewater facility.

Mr. Taylor stated that the City is doing a good job at reducing the requested department budgets.

Mr. Bob Zieser, Timberlake Drive, expressed his feelings that the City should not hold these budget hearings at 5:30 p.m. because of poor attendance. He suggested that the meetings be held at a public school. He also agreed with Ms. Gross that the city should reduce the number of police cars that are not used during hours of the day.

Mr. David Dudley, 436 Arrowwood Street, West Melbourne, stated that he is for the tax and believes that the residents of the City should be willing to pay their share. He stated that he does not believe that the tax money should be taken away from road improvements.

Mr. Charles Settgast, Timberlake Drive, West Melbourne, apologized for the public statements for conflicting statements of 'thinking out of the box' and 'thinking like everyone else'. He suggested that all roads from Palm Bay be 'ripped up'.

Mayor Willmarth closed the public hearing.

Council Member Blanchard stated that she is adamantly against placing a light at the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Henry Avenue for \$1.6 million. She stated that when she suggested removing that money it was because she had no intention to vote for an intersection improvement for \$1.6 million. She stated that her reason for removing money for the roads was to fund the start of priority road projects.

Moved by Council Member Blanchard, seconded by Council Member Delaney to adopt Resolution No. 2005-10.

City Manager Ryan read Resolution 2005-10 by title only.

Mayor Willmarth explained that this Resolution is for the amount agreed upon at the last budget hearing on September 12, 2005, in the amount of \$26,255,835.00.

Discussion:

Council Member Delaney stated that she believes this budget has been reviewed several times and she thinks that it has been reduced to a point as to remain providing high levels of service to the community. She asked about the police car situation as mentioned during the Public Forum.

Police Lieutenant Steve Wilkinson stated that if you cut the number of vehicles in half and drive them 24 hours a day, you would need to replace them twice as fast. He stated that there could also be a case where if a vehicle breaks down; there is a replacement vehicle available for service. He also stated there has been a policy put in place to reduce the reasons that a vehicle is used.

Council Member Delaney asked if it was possible to designate money to place into reserves.

City Manager Ryan stated that 100% of the ad valorem tax revenue was used to calculate the tax; however, there is 5% or approximately \$80,000.00 that is being designated as an additional reserve in this budget. He stated that the statute and most cities use only 95% of the budget estimates. The 5% differential becomes reserves. He also explained the Building Department reserve and why it cannot

be used to supplement the general City budget and that the City can tap those reserves; however, it is due back plus interest.

Council Member Salberg agreed with Council Member Blanchard on Hollywood Boulevard and Henry Avenue, and stated that he does not want any money spent on county roads. He stated that if we do not necessarily need a tax this year, we will most definitely need it next year. He stated that his quandary is which one is the worst case scenario. He suggested that the City Council do the right thing.

Deputy Mayor Rose stated that his reason for not supporting the tax at this time is that most of the money is going towards administrative costs. He believes that if the building expansion is going to take over a year, then hiring the new employees should wait till the following year. He stated that there are employees getting \$14,000.00 raises. He questioned the money needed to build the roads and not just \$500,000.00 to begin the road projects, and where the money to actually complete the roads is coming from. He stated that the city is not ready for the tax until the money can be allocated properly.

Council Member Blanchard asked Deputy Mayor Rose why he never brought these items up previously.

Deputy Mayor Rose stated that at a previous meeting, the City Council spent time discussing cellular telephones and Hollywood Boulevard and Henry Avenue, which was removed. He stated that we need to improve the roads.

Council Member Blanchard stated that all other items are administrative and that only one individual is getting a raise, which is simply to increase her salary as she has been underpaid until now.

Deputy Mayor Rose stated that he does not understand why that needs to be tied into the taxes. He stated that they need to be studied.

Council Member Blanchard stated that they recently had a compensation study and organizational analysis.

Council Member Salberg stated that it was an 'oversimplification and distortion of facts', that it is a catch up thing that Council had already discussed, and it is in no way a \$14,000.00 raise, but that it is a 'catch up' salary adjustment. He stated that it may be in the budget but it does not mean that it must be spent.

City Manager Ryan showed the comparison analysis of other cities in Brevard County.

Discussion among Council and audience regarding West Melbourne millage versus other cities in the County.

Mayor Willmarth stated that the millage rate of West Melbourne is to be based on the needs minus the projected revenues. He stated that he is concerned about the

possible degradation of our revenues and that there will be problems in the future. He stated that he agrees with Mr. Salberg that the Council is irresponsible if they do not adopt the proposed budget and tax rate.

Council Member Jones stated that he thinks the Council has worked very hard to bring the budget down, and that the Council does not have the authority to micromanage every dollar. He stated that it boils down to two things, the level and quality of service in West Melbourne. He stated that if the Council continues to cut, it will put the city in a tight situation, as well as reducing the quality of services offered by the City. He further stated that the City of West Melbourne needs to stand above others. Council Member Jones stated that no matter what is decided, it also will affect each one of the Council Members the same as the general citizens.

Deputy Mayor Rose stated that he is pretty sure the tax will pass by listening to the other Council Members. He stated that it does not, however, mean that it needs to be spent.

Mayor Willmarth stated that Deputy Mayor Rose is correct, just because the money is in the budget, does not need it needs to be spent and; in addition, any major spending must return to Council for approval.

Council Member Delaney asked for clarification as they have been through the budget line by line and her impression is that some items cannot be put off until the following year.

City Manager Ryan listed and explained each department and their requested line items.

- City Clerks Department: records management upgrades and improvements, promotion of secretary to deputy city clerk, Council travel increase.
- Administration Department: no change.
- Police Department: two additional officers, 24-hour coverage of the station, promotions, desk corporal.
- Finance Department: shared secretary.
- Parks Department: landscaping project maintenance, deferred until mid-year 2006.
- Community Development Department: additional planner.
- Code Administration Department: funded 100% by Building Department revenues.
- Public Works Department: drainage improvements, road resurfacing, additional maintenance worker.
- Non-Departmental: custodial worker (parks, police, city hall, public works), receptionist.
- Information Technology Department: no change.
- Engineering Department: additional engineering technician.
- Human Resource Department: not funded.

Council Member Delaney questioned that if there were things that could be cut, why did it not come up before this meeting.

City Manager Ryan explained that the Capital Projects highlighted in the budget, \$9.9 million, which is the 49% increase that is being seen in the advertisements. He stated that if that is removed, the budget is reduced to what it was in the previous year.

Council Member Salberg set his statement straight, and stated that he simply meant that Council needed to do what is necessary for the city.

Council Member Blanchard added that maybe those members of Council that feel strongly one way or the other should suggest reducing millage. She stated that she does not want a tax either, yet the Council needs to do what needs to be done. She stated that it is irresponsible of the Council not to make a decision. She questioned what happens if the Council fails to make a decision.

Mayor Willmarth stated that the attorney would need to advise Council and that the last budget approved on September 12 would become the budget.

Question called: motion carried. 5-1. Voting Nay was Deputy Mayor Rose.

III. ADOPTION OF PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE OF 1.9344

City Manager Ryan read Resolution No. 2005-11 by title, adopting a millage rate of 1.9344 as decided upon at the previous budget hearing on September 12, 2005.

Moved by Council Member Blanchard, seconded by Council Member Jones to approve Resolution No. 2005-11. Question called: motion carried. Motion passed 5-1. Voting Nay was Deputy Mayor Rose.

IV. ADJOURN

Mayor Willmarth adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

MAYOR

DEPUTY MAYOR

ATTEST: _____
CITY CLERK