

**PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order by Vice Mayor Leslie Ford Notaro, followed by a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**Roll Call:** Present were Councilmembers Pamela Gunn, John Pietrowski, and Wanda Schwerer; Vice Mayor Leslie Ford Notaro, City Manager Nancy Gonzalez, City Clerk Patricia Gentry, and City Attorney Paul Marino. Councilmember Jeril Cohen arrived at 4:32pm. Mayor Rob Baldwin arrived at 4:35pm. Councilmember Mitchell Krach arrived at 4:41pm.

**1. Continued discussion of funding options for undergrounding of utilities city-wide.**

Vice Mayor Notaro stated that at the last worksession the two options discussed were to pay for undergrounding of utilities from the Capital Improvement Fund, or to have a non-ad valorem special assessment for each section as it was done. There were pros and cons to each option. People who had purchased property which already had undergrounding that was part of their purchase price, felt that it should not be paid for from City revenues, that it should be paid for neighborhood by neighborhood. The problem with the neighborhood by neighborhood special assessment, was that the City would have to take a loan to pay for that upfront and the Vice Mayor was not sure that was an option for the City.

Mayor Baldwin arrived and Vice Mayor Notaro turned the meeting over to the Mayor.

Mayor Baldwin advised he had put together handouts that had been emailed to City Council earlier. They showed summaries of the non-discretionary Capital Improvement items, such as bridge repair, street repair, seawall repair, etc. The second was discretionary improvements that would be nice to have, but were not necessary.

Necessary upcoming improvements needed were street lighting upgrades, replacing the 22nd Street Bridge at approximately \$350,000.00, a Public Works building, the items list above, and others.

Some of the discretionary items were a pavilion at Bayside Park, upgrades to Bayside Park, internal street utility undergrounding, Marina improvements, and others.

He felt that trying to fund the undergrounding of utilities through the Capital Improvement Plan and undesignated funds from the budget, at \$150,000.00 per year, you could see that over 20 years it would be \$2.8 million dollars, which would not be enough to do the entire City. He believed this illustrates the impact of what would be needed to underground utilities throughout the entire City using City funds, as there are other ways to do it.

Discussion followed regarding the recommended minimum reserves for the City; that people who live on Gulf Boulevard, in the Condominiums, and on Belle Isle Avenue would not benefit from undergrounding; offset of costs to homeowners of increased property values versus increase in property taxes; homeowners in the audience today from Belle Isle, Tiffany, Wedgewood, and Crystal Cay had told a Councilmember that they had already paid and do not wish to pay again – and other homeowners had sent their emails to City Council; by doing the project in increments Duke Energy would absorb the engineering costs; that underground utilities are harder to find and restore after major storms; that it is more expensive to do the project by special assessment which would involve consulting and engineering fees than opposed to doing it through the CIP fund; that the City is not able to borrow money at this time; having the City fund the cost to set up the initial phase, and the homes who benefit from the undergrounding pay for the rest; that the cost for each successive neighborhood would increase with the passage of time; that all Residents must be notified, as there will be some cost to the Resident such as the connection from the underground wires to the home and upgrading the electrical service in the home; determining what section will be first; needing more information regarding a special assessment; hiring a consultant first; and having Staff check what other cities have done and who they have used.

Mr. Rudy Davis, 612 Belle Isle Avenue, stated, in part, that he had been a former Mayor of the City from 2005 to 2007, and City Council had done an extensive study during then through Brotherton Engineering. It was determined the cost at that time would have been \$4.5 million for Gulf and Causeway Boulevards, and an additional \$8 million for the interior streets. After public hearings Council did not find a consensus among the Residents to proceed due to the high cost. The Residents felt the cost to each homeowner was just too high for a beautification project. Mr. Davis believed the CIP funds for street resurfacing, stormwater mitigation and other critical projects should not be directed to a beautification project. At \$200,000 per year, calculations show that some people may not see their lines go underground in their lifetimes. In the name of fairness, the selection of where to begin at the start of each CIP budget should be by lottery with all streets included. Beginning with the interior streets would seem to be special interest driven. Gulf Boulevard would be the logical starting point as it is the street that feeds all of the streets, and is the only street that serves all Residents daily. He wished Council well in their consideration of undergrounding and asked that they fully understand all of the ramifications and not embark on a project until they have full consensus of all that will pay the bill. He asked if anyone had read the Brotherton study at

City Hall as it had good information. He stated that if those that wanted undergrounding on their street would pool their money they could do the job.

Mr. Jim Corrigan, 22nd Street, stated that approximately 14 years ago they had tried to do as Mr. Davis had recommended. There were 18 Residents that had wanted to underground utilities, but they were "shot down" by some very serious bills and money that was demanded up front, so they had to drop the issue. It was a dead issue for quite a while as work was done on this building, and on getting a police department. In the last few years they have looked into a tax zone as was recommended to them by the County. They have been working with CPWG Engineers to get an estimate of figures to work with. He stated they are working with an area for a tax zone of 115 homes off of 22nd Street. The total budget was \$694,000.00 which included Duke Energy, Bright House, Verizon, and other fees to homeowners. They are looking at it from a safety point of view from numerous power failures caused by fallen branches and wires coming down. This is a concern for people who are dependent on power for medical facilities, and who lose their phone service for 911. He advised what they need to proceed is "seed money", a short-term loan from the City, as they are looking at outlets for financing to be paid over a 20-year period.

**ADJOURN**

**MOTION** was made by Councilmember Pietrowski to adjourn the meeting.

**Motion passed 7-0.**

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Date Approved

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Leslie Ford Notaro, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Patricia A. Gentry, CMC, City Clerk