

**DeFuniak Springs City Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
February 24, 2025**

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bob Campbell called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Present: Mayor Bob Campbell; Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum (Seat 1); Councilmember Josh Sconiers (Seat 2); Councilmember Amy Heavilin (Seat 3); Councilmember Glen Harrison (Seat 4).

Absent: Councilmember Anothly Vallee (Seat 5).

Also, present were City Manager Koby Townsend, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Interim Finance Director Danielle McDaniel, and City Clerk Rafael Ali.

2. PRESENTATION AND/OR PROCLAMATION

A. Mayor Bob Campbell

1. Letter of Appreciation for Harley L. Henderson

Mayor Campbell read a letter of appreciation for former Mayor Henderson.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Additions/Deletions to the Consent Agenda

B. Approval of the Consent Agenda

A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda by Councilmember Bierbaum and seconded by Councilmember Heavilin; the motion passed without objection.

4. REGULAR AGENDA

A. Additions/Deletions to the Regular Agenda

B. Approval of the Regular Agenda

A motion was made to approve the Regular Agenda by Councilmember Bierbaum and seconded by Councilmember Heavilin; the motion passed without objection.

C. City Manager K. Townsend

1. DFS Tourism Discussion

Mr. Townsend stated that he will set up a workshop in March to have the tourism discussion.

2. RFQ 2025-01-PD - Land Development Code Update

Mr. Townsend presented on the RFQ 2025-01-PD - Land Development Code Update.

Mr. Townsend presented on all the firms for the land development code update.

Mr. Townsend stated that we need to establish who will serve on the review committee.

Mr. Townsend recommended forming a staff committee composed of the Mayor himself, Councilmember Vallee, and Mrs. Hoke from the Planning Board.

A motion was made to have staff be the review committee for RFQ 2025-01-PD by Councilmember Bierbaum and seconded by Councilmember Sconiers; the motion passed without objection.

Mr. Townsend stated that he recommends the review board to interview three of the 5 firms: Kimley-Horn, Barraco, and Parks Consulting Services.

A motion was made to interview Kimley-Horn, Barracco , and Parks Consulting Services by Councilmember Bierbaum and seconded by Councilmember Sconiers; the motion passed without objection.

Mrs. Heavilin asked if there is a reason why Mr. Townsend recommends those three firms.

Mr. Townsend explained that the North Florida company is a engineering firm and they don't really do planning and the other firm did not do well last time we engaged with them.

5. PUBLIC HEARING/ORDINANCES

6. REQUEST TO BE ON THE AGENDA

7. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Malinda Henderson, a citizen of DeFuniak Springs, Florida, stated that planning for the triathlon has begun.

Mayor Campbell asked how many people the event brought to DeFuniak Springs.

Mrs. Henderson responded that there were 100 participants in the race, and each brought people with them to assist during the event. She added that there were more spectators this year than ever before.

Donald Graham, a citizen of DeFuniak Springs, Florida, stated that annexation could help increase business in the city.

Mr. Graham recommended that the city create an annexation committee.

He added that this committee could discuss the benefits of being annexed into DeFuniak Springs.

Mayor Campbell stated that the city is working on involving professionals to assist with this effort.

Mr. Graham offered his help to the city if needed.

8. CITY ATTORNEY

9. LEGISLATIVE REQUESTS

A. Councilmember A. Heavilin

1. Twin Lakes Drive

Mrs. Heavilin presented on Twin Lakes Drive.

She stated that she knows residents who live on that street but are not connected to the city sewer system.

Mr. Adkinson stated that the city enacted a moratorium 15 years ago on impact fees. He also noted that there was a moratorium on tap fees.

Mr. Adkinson explained that the one firm requirement was that if the sewer was connected to a property, the property owner would begin paying the minimum charge. He further stated that some individuals within the city limits have been billed for the base sewer rate despite not being connected to the system.

Mr. Adkinson added that anyone who has been paying those charges would now be eligible to connect to the city sewer system. He clarified that while the city no longer charges impact or tap fees, it does assess capacity fees.

Mr. Adkinson suggested that anyone who has been billed for sewer service but is not connected should be allowed to connect at no additional cost to the customer, as it would not impact the system's capacity. He stated that he believes Mr. Knauer would agree with this approach.

Mr. Adkinson emphasized that a capacity fee is already considered a connection charge, and by definition, those paying it are already considered connected to the system. He recommended that the council work with the city manager to identify these accounts and give those residents a chance to connect.

He proposed a motion to authorize the city manager to identify every account being billed but not currently connected, and to ensure that they can connect to the city system without paying an additional connection fee.

Mayor Campbell noted that some citizens may need to install a pump.

Mr. Adkinson responded that any private connection charges would be the responsibility of the property owner.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that it is the homeowner's responsibility to make the physical connection to the system.

Mr. Adkinson reiterated that this effort would identify any individuals who are paying the base sewer or water rate and allow them to connect at no cost from the city.

Mayor Campbell asked if there would be any kind of sunset period for this policy.

Mr. Adkinson stated that if someone has been paying the sewer charge, they shouldn't be charged again for connection.

Mr. Bierbaum expressed his desire to see this initiative reach 100% completion. He acknowledged that it would be a daunting task for the city manager to complete.

Mr. Sconiers asked what would be done about those who do not want to connect.

Mr. Adkinson stated that, according to Florida statute, connection is mandatory if you have it available.

Mr. Adkinson stated that if a septic tank fails, the property owner is required to connect to the city sewer system.

Mr. Harrison asked Mr. Adkinson to clarify his statement regarding the ordinance.

Mr. Adkinson explained that he was referring to Florida statute.

Mrs. Heavilin stated that she is connected to the city sewer. She added that some of her neighbors, who are not connected, have been paying since 2016 and were not aware that they were not actually connected to the system.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that he is fine with allowing those residents to connect, and he just wants the matter resolved 100%.

Mr. Adkinson added that the only reason Mr. Townsend is able to proceed with this is because the previous motion referenced tap and impact fees.

A motion was made to authorize the City Manager to identify every account being billed for water and sewer but not currently connected to the city system and to allow them to connect without paying a capacity fee with October 1 being the end of the review window by Councilmember Heavilin and seconded by Councilmember Bierbaum; the motion passed without objection.

Mr. Townsend stated that he spoke with Mr. Holden about how the city handles connections.

Mrs. McDaniel stated that they will be able to check whether a customer is paying a usage charge.

She added that they would be able to sort accounts based on who is paying a usage charge.

Mr. Townsend noted that the process could take a while if manual checking is required.

He also stated that there will need to be a media push to inform residents about what the city is doing.

Mr. Townsend emphasized that we need to be mindful of the timeline.

2. Discussion on Pine Shores Natural Gas

Mrs. Heavilin presented on the topic of Pine Shores Natural Gas.

Mr. Adkinson stated that both he and Mrs. Heavilin own homes in Willow Run.

He explained that currently, if Mrs. Heavilin wants to connect to the gas line, a connection would have to be run across the whole road.

Mr. Adkinson raised the question of whether the cost should be borne by the individual resident or by the city, noting that it may make more sense to connect everyone in the area.

He also mentioned that there is a resident on that road who did not pay the connection fee.

Mr. Adkinson suggested that for any subdivision in a residential area, the city should reach out to see if residents are interested in connecting to the gas system.

He emphasized the need to determine whether the city wants to bring more customers onto the system or not.

Mayor Campbell stated that there needs to be a structured approach rather than just connecting a single person at the end of the road.

Mr. Adkinson concluded by stating that this kind of customer outreach is currently not taking place.

Mr. Townsend stated that natural gas has a long return on investment.

He added that water and sewer typically provide a greater return on investment.

Mr. Townsend emphasized that the city must operate like a business while continuing to provide essential services to the community.

He further stated that the city needs to formalize the return on investment (ROI) for each utility extension.

A motion was made to have the City Manager bring back a formalize policy on expansions and extensions for natural gas by Councilmember Bierbaum and seconded by Councilmember Sconiers; the motion passed without objection.

Mrs. Henderson asked how many of the homes on Pine Shores Drive are within city limits.

Mr. Adkinson responded that all of the homes are within the city limits.

B. Councilmember T. Bierbaum

1. Downtown Investment

Mr. Bierbaum presented on downtown investment.

He stated that he does not want Mr. Townsend to feel pressured to take action downtown based solely on the direction of one councilmember.

Mr. Bierbaum added that, from his perspective, the city should allocate manpower to the downtown area on a routine basis.

He also stated that he would like to direct the city manager to develop a plan for restriping on a regular schedule.

Mr. Bierbaum noted that the sprinkler system downtown needs maintenance work.

A motion was made to have the City Manager allocate weekly resources for mowing, street sweeping, weeding and other maintenance items and to bring budget recommendations regarding downtown by Councilmember Bierbaum and seconded by Councilmember Sconiers; the motion passed without objection.

Mr. Sconiers stated that he believes this should already be happening.

He added that downtown is the centerpiece of the town, and the goal is to encourage people to continue visiting and enjoying the downtown area.

Mrs. Heavilin asked how resources are currently allocated to the downtown area.

Mr. Townsend responded that there is a Christmas Reflections technician who shares responsibilities between the Christmas Reflections program and downtown, and that the city also has a street sweeper.

Mrs. Townsend stated that the city will need to assess how time is currently allocated and whether there are better times to carry out work downtown.

Mrs. Heavilin asked if inmates have been used to assist with some of the maintenance work.

Mr. Townsend stated that the city typically uses inmates for public areas, but the size of those work groups has decreased since COVID-19.

Mr. Harrison stated that he would like to see someone specifically allocated to keeping the downtown area clean.

He also commended Main Street for doing a great job maintaining downtown and noted that community pride helps reduce vandalism.

Mr. Harrison expressed that he is proud of the downtown area.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that this has been the same conversation he has had with city managers over the past five years.

He emphasized that he wants to establish, at the city council level, that downtown should be a weekend priority.

Mr. Sconiers asked Mr. Townsend whether he has enough people dedicated to downtown.

Mr. Townsend replied that he believes the city currently has enough staff.

Mr. Sconiers suggested that inmates could be used as a force multiplier.

Mr. Heavilin stated that whoever is responsible for parks should prioritize the downtown area.

Mr. Townsend responded that the city has many overlapping responsibilities and that he will review how to balance those duties once again.

Mr. Harrison recalled when the new high school opened, and the superintendent had a conversation with the students encouraging them to take care of the school. As a result, the students took ownership of the building for years.

10. EXECUTIVE COMMENTS

Mr. Townsend stated that the library bids are out and are expected to be returned by March 18, 2025.

He also stated that the city received 11 proposals for Continuing Engineering Services.

11. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mrs. Heavilin thanked the staff for their assistance on a recent Friday afternoon.

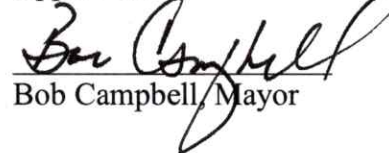
Mr. Bierbaum stated that Main Street is organizing a downtown cleanup on March 6th and encouraged anyone who is interested to participate.

He also stated that he would like to compliment Mr. Townsend for his leadership and thoughtful approach to addressing issues.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned 6:06 PM.

Approved:


Bob Campbell, Mayor

ATTEST:



Minutes taken by Rafael Ali

City Clerk

Proper notice having been duly given

