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**Town of Ponce Inlet
Town Council
Special Meeting Minutes
July 15, 2021**

6 **1. CALL TO ORDER:** Pursuant to proper notice, Mayor Smith called the meeting to order
7 at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers at 4300 South Atlantic Avenue, Ponce Inlet, Florida.

9 **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Mayor Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

11 **3. ROLL CALL:**

12 **Town Council:**

13 Mayor Smith, Seat #1

14 Councilmember Milano, Seat #2

15 Councilmember Caswell, Seat #3

16 Councilmember Israel, Seat #4

17 Vice-Mayor Paritsky, Seat #5

19 **Candidate(s) Present:**

20 David Loh, Council Candidate for Seat 3

22 **Staff Members Present:**

23 Mr. Baker, Chief Building Official

24 Ms. Cherbano, Deputy Clerk

25 Mr. Disher, Director, Planning & Development Department

26 Ms. French, Cultural Services Manager

27 Chief Glazier, Police Chief

28 Ms. Hunt, Assistant Deputy Clerk

29 Ms. McColl, Finance Manager

30 Lt. Mead, Police Lieutenant

31 Mr. Miller, Public Works Manager

32 Chief Scales, Fire Chief

33 Ms. Witt, Town Manager

35 **4. Additions, Corrections or Deletions to the Agenda** – None; although no formal motion
36 was made, the agenda was adopted as presented when Council yielded the floor to Ms. Witt.

38 **5. Amended Budget for Fiscal Year 20/21 and Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 21/22.**

40 **Town Manager's Presentation** –

41 Ms. Witt welcomed everyone and went over the planned format for the day, asking that Council
42 break at approximately noon to pick-up their meals and resume working through lunch until the
43 workshop is complete. She reviewed the memorandum dated July 1, 2021 (Attachment 1) outlining
44 four fiscal years - Final FY 19/20, Amended FY 20/21, Proposed FY 21/22, and the Forecast FY
45 22/23. She reported that the Reserves and other unassigned fund balance is \$3,645,976, which

46 equates to a 61% reserve or seven months; and that the water operation fund is 100% funded at a
47 balance of \$1,288,818. She noted the town's high reserves and low debt coupled with perfect,
48 comment-free audits for the last 5 years show that management has implemented practices to
49 ensure the protection of the town's finances and the town is in the best financial position of its
50 history.

51
52 Ms. Witt reviewed the amended budget for FY 20/21 and explained any changes of significance
53 as they true-up the current year.

54
55 Ms. Witt reviewed the proposed budget for fiscal year 21/22 with a proposed millage rate of 5.9
56 mills, estimated at 95% to produce \$5,650,493 in ad valorem revenue. She noted the town's current
57 millage rate is 5.9 and the rolled-back rate is (RBR) 5.5841 mills. The proposed millage rate is
58 5.66% above the rolled-back rate and according to the property appraiser, the collective taxable
59 value of property in Ponce Inlet has increased 5.66%. Ms. Witt reviewed the general fund budget,
60 noting anticipated revenues and operating expenses. She explained that the pay increases she is
61 proposing over the next two years, a \$2,600/year annual increase for each employee, will bring the
62 town into compliance with the \$15/hour minimum wage requirement in advance of the deadline
63 to remain competitive. The proposal puts the funds where they are most needed, percentagewise,
64 giving higher percentages to those with lower wages while still addressing compression. Ms. Witt
65 has also developed an increase proposal for the salary scale which brings about full compliance in
66 four years, still one year in advance of the deadline while addressing any compression issues that
67 could be created with new employees. Ms. Witt provided a summary of each of the other funds
68 and highlighted specific projects/expenses within. Other highlights within the proposed budget
69 include: initiate the fire service accreditation process; complete a septic-to-sewer project; purchase
70 additional public safety equipment; provide park improvements; and to complete a watershed
71 master plan. She explained staff's request to increase the part-time rental enforcement officer
72 position to a full-time position, noting that additional duties will be added to that position. She
73 stated that there are two subdivision retaining walls (that the town is responsible for) in danger of
74 collapsing and there are funds proposed to repair/replace those with rock walls and to replace one
75 John Deere Gator in the public works department. She continued to review the remaining funds
76 and line items. Ms. Witt noted that the town has applied for / been awarded \$880,500 in grants to
77 assist with the completion of these projects and expects to receive an award for another \$4,000,000
78 in grant funding assistance to accompany the 15% grant match for the South Peninsula Drive
79 Sidewalk Project.

80
81 **Council Discussion -**
82 Mayor Smith and other members of Council commended Ms. Witt and the staff for the thorough
83 and well thought out budget proposal.

84
85 Vice-Mayor Paritsky made suggestions for adjustments so that they could reduce the millage rate
86 from the proposed 5.9 mills to 5.82 mills, which would prevent a dollar value tax increase for
87 homesteaded properties even if they went up the maximum in their taxable value. These ideas
88 included: moving the town strategic planning process from FY 21/22 to FY 22/23; spreading the
89 fire department accreditation process over a three-year period (instead of the proposed two-year
90 plan); and to consider the removal of \$25,000 from both the Public Works and the Fire Department
91 Capital Funds.

92 Councilmember Israel suggested they look into leasing vehicles. Ms. Witt reported that the public
93 works trucks are rotated-out every ten years (life expectancy) and the police cars are rotated-out
94 every four years. Mayor Smith stated that leases and related expenses are based on the size of the
95 fleet therefore, it would be counterproductive for the town to enter a lease program due to the
96 number of vehicles in its fleet. Ms. Witt added that the auditor has advised against lease programs
97 in the past, due to the expense and no asset to show for it, but she will research if Council wishes.
98

99 Councilmember Caswell asked for clarification of the Community Driven Strategic Plan (CDSP)
100 portion of the accreditation process and whether pushing that to the second year with the full town
101 strategic plan in that same year would work. Chief Scales explained the accreditation process and
102 Ms. Witt stated that she believed these two planning processes could work very well together.
103

104 **Public Comment -**

105 Skip White, 4880 S. Atlantic Avenue shared his experience with lease programs adding that it
106 costs the lessee in the long term and advised against entering into any lease programs. Mr. White
107 expressed concerns that Elbers Park is not currently ADA-accessible but with the proposed
108 improvements, it would have to become ADA-compliant. Mr. White referred to the 13.19%
109 increase in the market values of properties, when comparing sale prices this year to last year and
110 stated that the town must do better with recruitment and retainment of police officers and suggested
111 offering some type of incentive to keep the employment pool from shrinking; he urged council to
112 plan ahead by providing an additional \$2,000/year to each officer in lieu of the take-home vehicle
113 other agencies provide. Ms. Witt agreed that take-home vehicles are customary in many
114 departments, and a \$2,000 per year incentive is manageable if Council wishes; Council expressed
115 support for adding this to the FY 21/22 budget.
116

117 David Loh, 103 Ocean Way Drive, Ponce Inlet, asked if the town has considered going through
118 the sheriff's office for vehicle purchases. Ms. Witt stated that the town *piggybacks* off the state's
119 bid contracts for all vehicle purchases, which is also what the sheriff does. Regarding the fire
120 department accreditation, Mr. Loh stated that Council needs to be prepared to make commitments
121 based on the risk assessment recommendations. Ms. Witt stated that this is one of Council's goals
122 and the risk assessment will provide us with the data for future decisions. Mr. Loh asked if Council
123 could take the \$30,000 earmarked for the pickleball shade structures and use it towards the
124 purchase of the exhaust recovery system. Chief Scales stated town has applied for a \$75,000 grant
125 and if awarded, will cover the cost of the exhaust system and the bunker gear cleaner.
126

127 **Town Council direction –**

128 Ms. Witt was directed to make the adjustments brought-forth for reductions by Vice-Mayor
129 Paritsky, and also the ideas brought-forth under public comment and by staff for increases to
130 include: providing approximately \$2,000 annually in cash incentives to police officers in lieu of
131 the customary take-home vehicle program; increase the part-time rental enforcement officer
132 position to a full-time position; and to budget for the purchase and installation of a vehicle exhaust
133 system for the fire department facility in FY 21/22 (instead of FY 22/23). These additions and
134 deletions are thought to likely off-set one another for a balanced budget with a millage rate of 5.9
135 mills. Ms. Witt stated she would incorporate the proposed changes and provide a revised version
136 to Council prior to the evening's regular meeting for consideration.
137

138 Ms. Witt inquired about the proposed budget hearing dates: September 9th, first reading and
139 September 22nd final reading/adoption at 6:00 p.m. Council agreed and expressed a desire to
140 change the September 16th regular meeting to September 22nd, to reduce the number of additional
141 meetings in September.

142

143 **6. ADJOURNMENT.** Mayor Smith adjourned the meeting at 1:27 p.m.

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145 Respectfully submitted by:

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Jeaneen Witt, CMC, Town Manager/Town Clerk

150 Prepared by: Peg Hunt, Assistant Deputy Clerk

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152 Attachment(s): Budget memorandum dated July 1, 2021 by Jeaneen Witt, Town Manager