



**Town of Ponce Inlet  
Town Council  
Special Meeting Minutes  
March 20, 2023**

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6 **1. CALL TO ORDER:** Pursuant to proper notice, Mayor Paritsky called the meeting to  
7 order at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 4300 South Atlantic Avenue, Ponce Inlet, Florida.

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

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11 **3. ROLL CALL:**

12 **Town Council:**

13 Mayor Paritsky, Seat #1  
14 Councilmember Milano, Seat #2  
15 Councilmember Caswell, Seat #3  
16 Councilmember Villanella, Seat #4  
17 Vice-Mayor Smith, Seat #5

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19 **Staff Members Present:**

20 Mr. Baker, Chief Building Official  
21 Ms. Cherbano, Town Clerk  
22 Mr. Disher, Interim Town Manager/Planning & Development Department Director  
23 Ms. French, Cultural Services Manager  
24 Ms. Gjessing, Permit Technician  
25 Chief Glazier, Police Chief  
26 Mr. Griffith, Public Works Manager  
27 Ms. Hunt, Deputy Clerk  
28 Mr. Okum, IT Manager  
29 Ms. Pierce, Planning & Development Office Manager  
30 Chief Scales, Public Safety Director *pro tem*  
31 Attorney Shepard, Town Attorney (via Zoom)

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33 **4. FIRST PUBLIC CANDIDATE INTERVIEW WITH INTERNAL CANDIDATE**  
34 **FOR THE TOWN MANAGER POSITION.** Mayor Paritsky summarized the process  
35 for this meeting. James Dinneen, Vice President, GovHR USA, distributed the questions to  
36 Council, and noted that no one has seen the list of questions except for him and Ms. Cherbano. He  
37 suggested that the questions be asked in alternating manner.

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39 Councilmember Villanella – *Ponce Inlet has wished to remain a non-destination town, but with*  
40 *all the attention we are attracting as a result of the advertising of Cultural Services events, that*  
41 *seems to be diminishing that desire to remain a quiet, seaside, paradise for our residents. Your*  
42 *thoughts?* Mr. Disher agreed that it is true that Ponce Inlet has become a place to live, visit, and  
43 work. He noted the Town’s efforts 20 years ago through its Visioning Process to not become a  
44 tourist-oriented community, and the resulting changes to its comprehensive plan and development  
45 codes to remove all tourist-oriented uses. He referenced the need for better coordination between  
46 the Town and Volusia County regarding traffic for special events and the beach, especially along

47 S. Atlantic Avenue and the Beach Street approach. The Town's Cultural Services Department  
48 provides cultural and educational events for residents and the public; but what generates more  
49 traffic are the special events, especially when there are multiple events going on at the same time.  
50 The Council has expressed interest in revisiting the special events ordinance, and Town staff will  
51 assist however possible.

52  
53 Councilmember Caswell – *What are the two most significant contributions you have made to the*  
54 *Town of which you are most personally proud?* Mr. Disher stated that he helped rewrite the Land  
55 Use and Development Code, including additional focus on special priority topics of the Planning  
56 Board and Town Council, a process which took years to accomplish; and more recently as Director  
57 of the Planning & Development Department, assisting the Code Enforcement and Building  
58 Divisions with modernizing their operations and increasing the level of staff.

59  
60 Councilmember Milano – *What do you want to do for Ponce Inlet as Town Manager?* Mr. Disher  
61 stated he wishes to lead the Town in the direction it wishes to go, using his Planning expertise, to  
62 face coming challenges over the short-, medium-, and long-term. He also wishes to organize and  
63 streamline procedures and empower Department heads and staff to do their jobs efficiently and  
64 effectively.

65  
66 Mayor Paritsky – *How does your prior experience and knowledge of Ponce Inlet guide your vision*  
67 *for the Town's future?* Mr. Disher stated that to achieve Ponce Inlet's mutual goals, a working  
68 relationship with the Boards, the Council, staff, and the residents is essential. His expertise as a  
69 certified planner and understanding of the Town's vision over the course of his 10 years here will  
70 help to bring about necessary changes .Having working relationships with County staff and  
71 understanding their perspective is also important given the intersecting responsibilities and  
72 interests between the County and the Town.

73  
74 Vice-Mayor Smith – *Why do you want to be the Town Manager?* Mr. Disher stated he likes the  
75 people here, noting that this is a great place to work because the staff is like family; it was hard for  
76 him to leave after his first five years, but that is why he came back; he enjoys getting to know the  
77 residents and learning what they want; ; Ponce Inlet is a unique and interesting place to which  
78 there is no comparison; helping address the challenges of this community has been a rewarding  
79 experience.

80  
81 Councilmember Villanella – *What progress has the Town made since the release of the*  
82 *environmental vulnerability study early last year?* Mr. Disher stated that since the study was  
83 presented to the Council last February, the Town has taken additional steps: the first being  
84 securing a grant for the Stormwater Watershed Master Plan, which could lead to greater insurance-  
85 rate reductions for property owners; the second being amendments to the Comprehensive Plan  
86 based on recommendations from the Vulnerability Assessment; the third will be future  
87 amendments to the Code to implement those policy changes. The Town has also been awarded a  
88 grant for an additional planning study called an Adaptation Action Plan, focused on the most  
89 vulnerable low-lying areas of the Town.

90  
91 Councilmember Caswell – *What obstacles/opportunities to you see in working with the Police,*  
92 *Fire, and Public Works departments in carrying out the day-to-day responsibilities as the Town*  
93 *Manager?* Mr. Disher stated he has enjoyed working with these departments and has experienced

94 no obstacles – and there are many opportunities to address deferred maintenance issues and  
95 improve the Town’s resilience to future flood events, especially with respect to the Town’s  
96 stormwater drainage system.

97  
98 Councilmember Milano – *Can you provide an example of a time where you led by example?* Yes,  
99 when the Town prepared to open the Ponce Inlet Historical Museum, no one here knew how to  
100 operate a museum, and the responsibility defaulted to the Planning Division and he was charged  
101 with working with staff and the Historical Preservation Board to make that happen. He has always  
102 tried to lead by example in terms of his work ethic, getting along with people, and working  
103 collaboratively. Another example is after the Surfside Condominium collapse, he brought together  
104 staff expertise from his department (planning, building, and code enforcement) and the Fire  
105 Department to properly bring information to the public, Boards, and Council; other examples  
106 include coordinating with all departments responding to the back-to-back hurricanes last year, and  
107 pulling together information for the Council on electric vehicles and public charging stations.

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109 Mayor Paritsky - *What positive trend or trends can you identify that you would like to see continue?*  
110 Mr. Disher stated the spirit of volunteerism.

111  
112 Vice-Mayor Smith – *Discuss your management experience, including any problems that you*  
113 *encountered and solutions you came up with, that shows your management style.* Mr. Disher stated  
114 his is a collaborative style; he reviews all documents, takes a team approach, sets goals and  
115 expectations, learns what issues are important to staff and what matters to them as people, and  
116 attempts to address concerns; he has a total of 18 years in the supervisory role.

117  
118 ■ End of Questions

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120 Council discussed Mr. Disher’s responses and experiences. Noting that if Mr. Disher does not  
121 know something, he will state so; appreciate his humility and honesty, noted his understanding of  
122 Ponce Inlet’s Vision and that of a beachside community; and commended his performance as  
123 Interim Town Manager since October 2022.

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125 Councilmember Milano moved to not consider other candidates and to offer the Town Manager  
126 position to Michael E. Disher, contingent upon execution of a contract; seconded by Vice-Mayor  
127 Smith. The motion PASSED 5-0, with the following vote: Councilmember Milano – yes; Vice-  
128 Mayor Smith – yes; Mayor Paritsky - yes; Councilmember Caswell - yes; Councilmember  
129 Villanella - yes.

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131 **5. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

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133 Respectfully submitted by:

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137 Kim Cherbano, CMC / Town Clerk  
138 Prepared by: Peg Hunt, CMC / Deputy Clerk