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**Town of Ponce Inlet**  
**Town Council**  
**Budget Workshop Minutes**  
**June 23, 2023**

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

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Mayor Paritsky.

3. **ROLL CALL:**

**Town Council:**

Mayor Paritsky, Seat #1

Councilmember Milano, Seat #2

Councilmember Caswell, Seat #3 - Absent

Councilmember Villanella, Seat #4

Vice-Mayor Smith, Seat #5

**Staff Members Present:**

Ms. Cherbano, Deputy Clerk

Mr. Disher, Town Manager

Mr. Dunlap, Public Works Assistant Director

Ms. French, Cultural Services Manager

Chief Glazier, Police Chief

Ms. Hall, Accountant/Grants Coordinator

Ms. Hugler, Office Manager, Fire Department

Ms. McColl, Finance Manager

Mr. Okum, IT Manager

Chief Scales, Fire Chief / Interim Public Works Manager

Ms. Spears, Office Manager, Public Works

Ms. Stewart, Assistant Deputy Clerk

4. **Discussion – Capital Improvements and Level-of-Service Enhancements** – Mr. Disher provided a presentation and overview of current reserves, assumed revenue, obligations, and priorities. He noted that the roll-back rate of 4.89 will not cover the Town’s costs and obligations. He also noted that 47% of the Town’s households are homesteaded this year, an increase from 35% in previous years. He referred to the list of purchases, projects, and services from all departments that are needed to maintain or enhance the level-of service provided. He noted that each item was either prioritized by the Essential Services Advisory Board (ESAB), tied to a Council goal, or a legislative appropriation request, or a grant. He reviewed the list of needed equipment and projects. The town applied for appropriations from the state’s budget for two replacement generators, portable message boards, and storm drain backflow devices but those were vetoed by the Governor; a replacement generator for the community center was approved. He reviewed the professional services projects which includes a salary survey; the last salary survey was conducted in 2016. This would involve a consultant and include not only a salary survey, but benefits. Professional services projects also include Fire Department Accreditation Self-

47 Assessment Manual which is needed for its accreditation; CRS consultants and maps to maintain  
48 the Town's flood insurance rating, an Adaptation Action Plan for Planning and Development; and  
49 a study for a new stormwater utility fee and implementation. The Town conducted a stormwater  
50 utility fee study in 2008 but chose not to implement it. A consultant is required by law as fees must  
51 be set by a study; the cost could be less if the previous study can be updated. He reviewed monthly  
52 stormwater utility fees charged by cities within both Volusia and Flagler County that were  
53 presented earlier this week to the Volusia County Council. He reviewed new personnel to be  
54 considered within the new budget which include a budget analyst, three firefighters (funded  
55 through a SAFER grant, applied for), two police officers, and two Public Works maintenance  
56 technicians; he explained why these new personnel are needed.

57  
58 Mr. Disher reviewed the rankings of the ESAB priorities which focused on Fire, Police and  
59 Public Works. Mayor Paritsky stated she is focused on potential new revenue streams for the Town  
60 and referred to the stormwater utility fee study. She suggested hiring a lobbyist for a six-month  
61 period at an appropriate monthly rate to assist with paperwork that must be prepared for  
62 appropriations requests and to meet deadlines. Our legislators were wonderful to us this year and  
63 pushed everything to the Governor's desk; however, we need a lobbyist between our legislators  
64 and the Governor's desk. She agreed with the salary survey to help bring in and retain employees.  
65 She referred to the potential mowing contract with Public Works; the Town is currently providing  
66 a free service to the owners of vacant undeveloped property. Councilmember Villanella agreed  
67 with Mayor Paritsky; we need to understand the Public Works Department and the things that have  
68 not been done due to cost. He said, in hindsight, the roll-back rate from last year was not the wisest  
69 choice. We need to educate the public regarding what the Town is facing. Councilmember Milano  
70 added that until recently, homesteaders were still in the 30% range; it is now at 47%. The reserves  
71 are in place to keep things moving in a case of emergency, but the reserves fund dropped from an  
72 eight-month reserve to a five-month reserve after the hurricanes last year. Residents need to  
73 understand why taxes may increase and the importance of storm pipe cleaning to prevent flooding.  
74 Mayor Paritsky noted residents also need to understand the way Council voting will work  
75 depending on where the millage rate ends up due to the roll-back rate. Mr. Disher explained that  
76 per state law, taxes can be increased by a certain amount that requires a vote at each level; the  
77 Council can raise a certain amount with a simple majority. Anything above that would require a  
78 two-thirds vote and above that, a unanimous vote. More information will be provided for the July  
79 budget workshop. Vice-Mayor Smith noted that the first priority should be to replace the reserves  
80 that were depleted. He feels the staff knows what is best regarding other priorities to keep the  
81 Town in its best position. Mayor Paritsky opened public comment.

82  
83 Mr. Skip White, 4885 S. Atlantic Avenue, stated he reviewed the budget information  
84 thoroughly; he urged the Council to prioritize those items that have the greatest impact on the  
85 level-of-service that is delivered to the residents. He referred to the proposed budget analyst  
86 position and asked if there was a previous employee in that role. If so, their salary should be in the  
87 current year budget. Mr. Disher explained that the majority of work on past budgets was done by  
88 the former Town Manager; it is now being done by multiple current staff; there is not a staff  
89 position dedicated to preparing the budget. Mr. White added that it is important to explain to  
90 residents the financial impact of last year's hurricanes; he asked if the reimbursement from FEMA  
91 would bring the reserves back to six or seven months. Ms. McColl explained the FEMA  
92 reimbursement is not definitive yet; if it is received, it will not bring the reserves back to seven  
93 months. Mayor Paritsky asked for further clarification on where the reimbursement funds will go.

94 Ms. McColl explained money was borrowed from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund so  
95 most of the reimbursement will go to replace those funds.

96  
97 Mr. Joe Cannon, 109 Beach Street, stated it was a mistake last year on how much to roll-  
98 back and now we are facing a challenge; the focus needs to be on how to make-up those lost funds.  
99 There are services and projects needed that are important to the town and to maintain the level-of-  
100 service and safety we are used to.

101  
102 Mr. Mark Oebbecke, 4758 S. Peninsula Drive, stated he supports the additional staff that  
103 is proposed within reason; they are necessary to maintain the quality of life here. He referred to  
104 the sidewalk project and noted steps already have been taken to mitigate safety concerns by  
105 lowering the speed limit and removing electric bikes from the sidewalks. He has been told that to  
106 have an effective bicycle/pedestrian path, at least 10-feet is needed to mitigate any issues. He  
107 would prefer seeing reserve funds allocated to ensuring residents can recover from a hurricane  
108 versus adding two feet of sidewalk. Mayor Paritsky noted she is appreciative of the public  
109 comments and that they follow her thinking regarding level-of-service and that staff has what they  
110 need to continue to provide the service the residents expect. Councilmember Villanella commented  
111 that we need to look at the best possible case and trim it back if necessary. Councilmember Milano  
112 agreed with Vice-Mayor Smith's comment that staff has determined what is best for the citizens  
113 of Ponce Inlet. Mr. Disher explained that he spoke with Councilmember Caswell earlier and was  
114 provided with her priorities; she is 100% behind the new staff positions; she supports anything to  
115 do with stormwater maintenance, Public Works, the Police Department and Fire Department. She  
116 had concerns regarding the stormwater utility fee; her preference is to budget for maintenance  
117 rather than create a new fee. She is opposed to changes regarding personnel leave and  
118 compensation time. Mr. Disher added that he will be proposing to extend the Public Safety Director  
119 *pro tem* position for another year. Chief Scales has been in this position in addition to his position  
120 as Fire Chief. Mayor Paritsky agreed and asked when this position will be discussed again. Mr.  
121 Disher explained that by resolution, the position expires six months after the Town Manager was  
122 hired which will be in October. Currently, it is not a separate position but is "working out of class"  
123 or outside his normal job. Vice-Mayor asked for clarification if there will be an extra position for  
124 a Public Safety Director once Chief Scales retires. Mr. Disher replied no; it would involve  
125 changing the job description of the Fire Chief or Police Chief if it was made a permanent position,  
126 if it continues in this model; it works for right now. It will be re-evaluated at a later date.

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128 **6. ADJOURNMENT.** Mayor Paritsky adjourned the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

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130 Respectfully submitted by:

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133 Kim Cherbano, Town Clerk

134 Prepared by: Debbie Stewart, Assistant Deputy Clerk

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136 Attachment(s): *none*

