

## EXCERPTED FROM JULY 20, 2023 TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

### 11. ORDINANCES (FIRST READING) AND RESOLUTIONS:

\* \* \*

**B. Resolution 2023-06. Attorney Shephard read the resolution into the record by title only. A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF PONCE INLET, VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA ADOPTING THE PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE FOR THE LEVYING OF AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAXES FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES ON ALL TAXABLE PROPERTY WITHIN THE TOWN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2023, AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2024; ESTABLISHING THE PUBLIC HEARING DATES AND TIMES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTING RESOLUTIONS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

- Mr. Disher stated this resolution establishes the proposed millage rate that the town will be working with between now and when the final millage rate is adopted in September. The rate that has been set is the product of months of work with input from staff department heads and Councilmembers over two budget workshops. The proposed 6.5 millage rate is designed to maintain the level of service provided by the town to its residents and citizens, accounts for stormwater maintenance and improvements, and for the damages from the hurricanes, legal fees, and other unforeseen expenses. Staff will be working to streamline the budget as much as possible between now and September and meet the Council's expectation of level of service to the residents. Mayor Paritsky thanked Mr. Disher and staff for the work put into this proposed budget that addresses the Council's goals, the vulnerabilities of the town, and the needs of the residents. Council has received public input and recommendations from the Essential Services Advisory Board (ESAB), and advice from the accreditation company for the Fire Department. The proposed budget provides the funds to match these goals, needs and services. Councilmember Milano noted that there have been two budget workshops thus far with another scheduled for September 6, 2023, before the final budget is adopted. Mayor Paritsky added councilmembers have had the opportunity to review the budget and each line item, to speak with the department heads and have their concerns and the public's concerns addressed. She opened public comment.

Dr. Arun Iyampillai, 1 Mar Azul, stated that any time the Council is making decisions regarding public money, they must look at the cost versus benefits; he referred to the \$55,000 allocated to the Ponce Inlet Community Center for a new generator and noted it is not a hurricane shelter and there is no need for it there. He noted there is an 8.5% increase in property values and half the population does not have a homestead exemption, so there will be extra taxes coming in. He would like to reduce the millage rate from 5.3 to 3.9 and requested council review each line item of the proposed budget; if firefighting gear is needed, the town should ask the citizens and businesses to donate. The citizens here are affluent and can afford to donate towards the defibrillator/monitors. We must look for waste and do a cost versus benefit on each line item. Mr. Charles Burge, Harbour Village Links South, stated the millage rate decreased last year and the only person that questioned it was Mr. White; he does not understand the yo-yo effect where in good times taxes go down and in times like now, they are raised. There should be a standard approach to this, so it is more effective for citizens to manage their finances as a homeowner. He

suggested it be done on a two- or three-year basis instead of annually. He is for fortifying the town and supplying our first responders with the necessities needed to protect us; however, no one other than Mr. White discussed the lower millage rate last year. Councilmember Villanella explained that Florida is known as the home-rule state, which means that the municipalities are responsible for all expenses; we cannot rely on the federal, state, or county government for assistance as other states can. The transparency of the budget process in Ponce Inlet is outstanding and the document is available for all citizens to critique and make comments. It has been discussed for years to increase the police and fire presence and that is being included in the budget; this is a large item number and is representative of why the tax rate is going up in addition to the expenses incurred from the last hurricanes. We are waiting on reimbursement for some of that expense from the federal government. We are in the final year of paying for the municipal facility and there may be a minor reduction next year.

*Councilmember Villanella moved to approve Resolution 2023-06, adopting a proposed millage rate for fiscal year 2023/24 and establishing dates for the tentative and final millage rate public hearings; seconded by Councilmember Milano. The motion PASSED 5-0, with the following vote: Mayor Paritsky – yes; Councilmember Milano – yes; Councilmember Caswell – yes; Councilmember Villanella – yes; Vice-Mayor Smith – yes.*

Mr. Disher noted that the original date of the first hearing was September 7, 2023, but had to be changed as it conflicted with the date of the Volusia County School Board budget hearing; the Town's hearing date cannot be on the same date as the budget hearing of another taxing authority. It is now scheduled for September 6, 2023, at 6:00 pm. He noted that the generator for the community center received \$20,000 from state appropriations which will offset the \$55,000 listed in the budget.