AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
VENETIAN CENTER, 1 DOZIER COURT
MONDAY, JUNE 28, 2021 5:30 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Commission held a regular meeting Monday, June 28, 2021, at the Venetian Center. Mayor Pro Tem Pederson called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Jimmy Burry
Commissioner Jay Connell
Commissioner Dan Robuck
Mayor Pro Tem Mike Pederson

Mayor John Christian was absent. Also present were City Manager (CM) Al Minner, City Clerk (CC) J. Andi Purvis, City Attorney (CA) Fred Morrison, the news media, and others.

INVOCATION

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

2. PROCLAMATIONS:

A. None

3. PRESENTATIONS:

A. None

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

This section is reserved for members of the public to bring up matters of concern or opportunities for praise. Issues brought up will not be discussed in detail at this meeting. Issues will either be referred to the proper staff or will be scheduled for consideration at a future City Commission Meeting. Comments are limited to three minutes.

There were no public comments.

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

Routine items are placed on the Consent Agenda to expedite the meeting. If the Commission/Staff wish to discuss any item, the procedure is as follows: (1) pull the item(s) from the Consent Agenda; (2) vote on remaining items with one roll call vote, (3) discuss each pulled item and vote by roll call

Items pulled for discussion:

5.A.1 - City Commission Meeting Minutes Regular meeting held June 14, 2021
5.B.1 - Construction Services Agreement with Team Fishel, Inc.

Commissioner Robuck moved to adopt the Consent Agenda except for **5.A.1 and 5.B.1**, and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the Consent Agenda, as follows:
(Each item has its coordinating Resolution number listed below the header)

A. CITY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES:

1. Regular meeting held June 14, 2021

Commissioner Robuck introduced the regular meeting minutes from the meeting held on June 14, 2021 and moved for approval, and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson pointed out that he would like the minutes to reflect a change under 5.C.3, the airport discussion on page twelve, the second paragraph, fifth sentence where it states "the most important comment that he wanted to clarify is that "T-hangars" are versatile. This should say "box hangars". He already brought this up to the City Clerk and the official minutes will be corrected to reflect this change.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson asked if there were any further questions or comments from the Commission and the audience. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the minutes as corrected.

B. PURCHASING ITEMS:

1. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute a Construction Services Agreement with Team Fishel, Inc. to provide labor and equipment to the City of Leesburg Electric Department for the construction of two Leesburg Electric utility projects for an amount of $1,527,435.00; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 10,872

Commissioner Robuck introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Robuck made motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Robuck stated he pulled this item because of the amount; it is a million and a half dollars. Even though it is for electric utilities for The Villages expansion, it is a huge amount and he would like the City Manager to provide an overview for everyone on what this is for. **City Manager (CM) Minner** stated that before Commissioner Burry and Commissioner Connell came aboard, the City issued fifteen million dollars of debt in the Electric Department for the purpose of making a few different system improvements. Those numbers were four million dollars to repay ourselves for the transformer improvements, nine million dollars for The Villages expansion, and then two million dollars was for various other improvements; which is sort of associated with The Villages but not quite. It also goes with the feeders down south of US-27 and the feeders coming out of the north substation. That was the plan, and the intention with The Villages extension, and part of the Duke territorial trade was with the nine hundred and fifty houses once they are online that would generate the new sales revenue to cover that debt. The debt on that fifteen million was in the neighborhood of one point one and one point two million dollars, and the funding would then come from the sales. The one point five million dollars of work is associated with the two feeders going out to The Villages expansion. In essence, the money coming to cover the cost of that contract work will be coming out of the proceeds that we have from that debt expansion. There is another half a million dollars associated with the materials that they still have to purchase on that. This here is approximately a two million dollar project; which is part of the nine million dollars for expanding out to The Villages. This is covered by the debt proceeds and the debt proceeds annual payment is covered by the sales. **Commissioner Burry** added that we would get more units out of the deal doing it this way. **CM Minner** continued to say that part of that goes back to when they first did the territorial agreement; in the original agreement with The Village, the City was going to service the 470 property. Duke was actually going to service everything in Sumter County, but The Villages sat down with both utility providers and asked for us to come up with a different territorial agreement because their preference was instead of the historical territories, they wanted territories that matched with their Villages. So, we did a flipflop with The Villages and that gave us the nine hundred and thirty two units versus about eight hundred and seventy five that was going to be in the 470 property. Remember that 470 property was different because everything in the 470 property was not ours; we only had a north third of it, that was it, that was all that was in our territory. It was advantageous to us because we got more homes and we got the load sooner. **Commissioner Robuck** pointed out that these houses are all located outside of the City and this alone is a big reason why we can make some of the improvements in Leesburg. It is because we have the electric and gas systems that are serving a much larger area than just the City of Leesburg. **CM Minner** added that there will be a number of customers coming on those two lines coming out of the north substation that will get better redundancy and newer systems and it will also help to serve Tara Oaks better. Now, even though this is a nine million dollar Villages expansion, these two feeders will improve services in that northwest section of town and there are existing customers that will have a benefit in services as well.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

C. RESOLUTIONS:

1. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to renew an existing Interlocal Agreement between the City of Leesburg and the City of Tavares, Florida for the provision of Automatic Aid for Fire and Rescue Services; and providing an effective date.**

Resolution 10,865

2. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into an Interlocal Agreement between the City of Leesburg and the City of Groveland, Florida for the provision of Automatic Aid for Fire and Rescue Services; and providing an effective date.**

Resolution 10,866

3. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Leesburg Police Department to apply for and, if awarded, accept an Edward Byrne FY 2021 Local Solicitation Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice (JAG) to supplement costs associated with the purchase of department equipment; and providing an effective date.**

Resolution 10,867

4. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, accepting a Utility Easement from WASA Holdings LLC., for the purpose of granting the City an easement over the property described therein; and**

providing an effective date.

Resolution 10,868

5. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, granting to Lake Denham Ventures, LLC, an extension of two years, for a total of six years from the date of each agreement entered into by the developer for installation of infrastructure, to report connections to new electric meters in its development known as Lake Denham Estates, for purposes of determining if the developer is entitled to a credit per meter against the developer share of the difference in cost between overhead and underground service, or to apply to reduction of the amount of any bond placed with the City by the developer to secure its share of such costs; and providing an effective date.**

Resolution 10,869

6. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Amendment 2 to Cost-Share Agreement between St. Johns River Water Management District and City of Leesburg for the Turnpike Wastewater Facility Water Quality Improvement Project; and providing an effective date.**

Resolution 10,870

7. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Amendment 2 to Public Transportation Grant Agreement (PTGA) (Financial Project No. 446941-1-94-01) with the Florida Department of Transportation, to add construction funds to complete the US Customs & Border Protection Facility Rehabilitation project, at the Leesburg International Airport; and providing an effective date.**

Resolution 10,871

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND NON-ROUTINE ITEMS: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INFORMATION SIGN-UP SHEET (YELLOW) AVAILABLE

A. SECOND READING OF ORDINANCES

1. **An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, changing the zoning on approximately 221 +/- acres from PUD (Planned Unit Development) to PUD (Planned Unit Development) to allow for commercial and residential development for a property generally located east of U.S. Highway 27 and**

south of Windsong Oak Drive, as legally described in Sections 25 and 36, Township 20 South, Range 24 East, and Sections 30 and 31, Township 20 South, Range 25 East, Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Windmill)

ADOPTED ORDINANCE 21-24

Commissioner Burry introduced the ordinance to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the ordinance by title only.

Commissioner Robuck made motion to adopt the ordinance and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the ordinance.

B. FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES

1. **An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, extending the expiration date set by Ordinance No. 00-29 and later extended to September 30, 2003, then extended again to September 30, 2006, and then extended again to September 30, 2009, then extended again to September 30, 2012, then extended again to September 30, 2015, extended again to September 30, 2018, then extended to September 30, 2020, then extended once more to September 30, 2021 for the participation by the City of Leesburg in the Municipal Service Taxing Unit established by Lake County to fund Ambulance and Emergency Medical Services; and providing an effective date.**

Commissioner Robuck introduced the ordinance to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the ordinance by title only.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience. There were none.

2. **An ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, vacating approximately 2.25 acres (98,010 square feet) of right of way, for a property generally located south of Dixie Avenue and east of Lake Street, as recorded in Plat Book 1,**

Page 69, Public Records of Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Venetian Isle #2)

Commissioner Robuck introduced the ordinance to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the ordinance by title only.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Robuck remarked that he spoke with the City Manager on this because he questioned why we were giving away three-acres of land. He had recently bought some right-of-way for RoMac and it was not free so the City Manager explained to him that this was not actually right-of-way even though there is no actual plat on this; it is actually part of the property. **CM Minner** stated this is a statutorial thing and there is no public purpose in this right-of-way, as it is owned inclusively by one property owner. There was a PUD redone on this property; so now statutes prohibit us from doing that and we are now basically cleaning up the map to be conducive with the PUD. We are doing this in a two step process; it is this item and the next one on the agenda. That is the way the petitioner has requested the vacation. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** agrees with Commissioner Robuck we are giving away real estate and asked why we cannot sell it. **Commissioner Robuck** pointed out that the way it was described to him is there was never actually a street there so you would never have viewed this as City of Leesburg property because it was always part of this parcel. **CM Minner** added that there is no public purpose to the property and the bottom line is that it has been owned continuously by one person and there is a PUD over it that makes that null in void which prohibits us from selling it.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson stated this item is a first reading and will be held over.

3. **An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, vacating approximately 0.73 acres (34,970 square feet) of right of way, and retaining a utility and a public ingress and egress easement for a property generally located south of Dixie Avenue and east of Lake Street, as recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 69, Public Records of Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Venetian Isle #3)**

Commissioner Robuck introduced the ordinance to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the ordinance by title only.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience. There were none.

C. NON-ROUTINE ITEMS

1. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida granting approval of a request for a Mural on the property of Leesburg Marketplace Shopping center, located on the southwest corner of U.S. Highway 441 and Perkins Street; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 10,873

Commissioner Robuck introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

CM Minner commented that this request is asking permission to do public art. He thought there may be some confusion with this item being associated with the Leesburg Art Center, but it is not and he wanted to clarify that; however, the concept is the same with respect to the type of request. The owner of the facility would like to put up a mural on the side of their building and they are seeking Commissions permission and approval to do so. **Commissioner Burry** asked if the applicant would be able to proceed with the mural without Commission approval. **Planning and Zoning Manager (PZM) Miller** stated that under the City's sign code, in order to paint a mural, an applicant has to receive permission from the City Commission. **Commissioner Burry** commented that he approves of this and that it looks good. **Commissioner Robuck** also remarked that he thinks the rendering looks good.

Commissioner Robuck made motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

2. Appointment of Members to City Advisory Boards

a. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida Appointing a Member to the General Employees Retirement Board of Trustees; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 10,874

Commissioner Burry introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Robuck made motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

b. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida Appointing Two Regular Members to the Planning Commission; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 10,875

Commissioner Robuck introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Robuck made motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson stated he was a little confused because at first he thought we had just the right number of people applying for the open positions but now he is not sure if that is the case. **CM Minner** replied there were two applications and two positions. The two open positions, set to retire, are being requested to be refilled by the existing members; Ted Bowersox and Frazier Marshall.

Commissioner Robuck asked how the City advertised these vacancies because he had no idea these positions were up. **City Clerk (CC) Purvis** answered that they are advertised in the newspaper for two consecutive weeks. **Commissioner Robuck** stated that for boards like Planning and Zoning, these are pretty important boards and a lot of stuff comes before them; even though he does have a lot of questions regarding the purpose for this board, but if we are going to have these boards we should be posting these out on Facebook where people actually look. The Daily Commercial has a subscription base of like five thousand people and of those five thousand he bets maybe five of them read the notices. He knows legally that is what we have to do, but if we are going to have these boards we should be recruiting people. This is not a slight to Mr. Bowersox or Mr. Marshall because there is no question on how much both of them have given back to this community and especially with Mr. Bowersox between the City Commission and the Planning and Zoning Board he has been at this for decades. With that being said, the point is that we need new people to be involved and those new people are not finding out about these opportunities because if the Commissioners do not know when these things are coming up, how are other people are going to know. When you look at the Planning and Zoning Board they are out of step with this Commission and we frequently overturn them. That board seems to be very antigrowth and it is a whole nimby thing where it is not in my backyard; which is a perfectly clear outlook to have if you do not to see Leesburg grow and you want to see it as it was and that is a valid view. However, that is not one that a majority of this Commission holds based on the actions that we have been taking. He would like to see this re-advertised so that we can get a broader pool of applicants, he would like to see them have term limits on all the boards, especially Planning and Zoning, because with someone being on there for decades that is just a bad idea. Just like it would be a bad idea for someone to be sitting on the City Commission for decades. It is only advisory board and we are constantly overturning them. It is the same people that go to these meetings for hours and complain, then it comes to us and these people have to back to us and complain, so he looks to staff as to why we have to have a Planning and Zoning Board. **CM Minner** remarked that it is statutory. **CA Morrison** agrees that yes, the State law requires we have that board. **Commissioner Robuck** remarked that it seems like such an exercise in futility to have everyone come and do the same thing twice, but if the State says we have to then we have to it. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** asked if this is the only board that is statute driven. **CM Minner** responded yes, and in the past we have used Facebook and we have put it on the website. Historically, since he has been here we have struggled with filling all advisory board positions. He questioned when these terms expire.

CC Purvis answered the end of September. **CM Minne**r said we could table this and revisit it at the end of August. We do not have to take action tonight, we could let it sit, put out some advertisements on the website, hit the newspaper again, then come back and revisit it at the second meeting in August. **Commissioner Robuck** commented that the one time Commissioner Hurley really pushed this we had like eight applicants because they could not take everyone. **CM Minner** laughingly said he remembers that and we can blame that one on Commissioner Hurley because he did put the arm on a bunch of folks when this issue popped up. If the preference of the Commission is to table this item we can do that. **Commissioner Burry** commented that we have already voted on one board. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** pointed out that we voted already on the Retirement Board to keep Al Halliday. **Commissioner Burry** questioned how long Al Halliday has been on that board. **CM Minner** replied he has been there quite a while. **Commissioner Robuck** stated that his concern is mainly with the Planning and Zoning Board because people actually show up to those meetings. He thinks with this being a constructive board, that a different board make up could make it more constructive and could maybe bring it more in line with this Commission. This is also the board where in the past people have expressed an interest being appointed, but this time they did not.

Commissioner Burry commented that perhaps we should introduce limits like we have and maybe that board should also fall under that, but we only had two people apply. **CM Minner** pointed out that theoretically they do have term limit for this board; a three year term limit. This body appoints and reappoints people to those terms and if they keep reappointing the same people that is what happens. **Commissioner Burry** commented that if it is the same two people reapplying for the same two positions then there really is no choice. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** remarked that he respects Commissioner Robuck's comments and he believes Frazier was new to the board; just voted on two or three years ago. **CM Minner** said this would be his second time appointed to the board. **PZM Miller** remarked that he believes it would be his third time appointed. He has been around awhile and he is also present. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** stated he personally knows Ted Bowersox and even though he has been on there a long time, he would support these two men and then moving forward we can talk about making changes with publishing and how we can get more names.

Commissioner Burry remarked that being the newbie he has only seen the current PUD's and approvals that have come before them thus far and basically we have agreed with what has come from Planning. **Commissioner Robuck** commented that this year going forward might be a bit different because there are some pretty contiguous ones out there and we have had quite a few seven-zero disapproval votes from the Planning Commission where they have come to this Commission and they have been approved in the past. The applicants get it, they know their vote is not final and the only people that show up at the meetings are the ones that do not want this stuff. They are not getting paid, so it is really hard to sit here when everyone in the room wants you to do one thing. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** agreed that we have been in agreement with Planning and Zoning as of late; knowing there are new members on this Commission. He has been on this Commission for two and a half years and he remembers his first year there were a lot of disagreements, but they talked about it, the board knows where we stand and it has been better as of late.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Robuck	No
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Three yeas, one nay, the Commission adopted the resolution.

c. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida appointing Regular Members to the Historic Preservation Board; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 10,876

Commissioner Robuck introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Burry made motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Robuck seconded the motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Robuck stated he would have the same comments going forward and would like to see these advertised on social media. **Commissioner Burry** asked if we are retaining the same members on this board too. **CM Minner** stated yes. **PZM Miller** pointed out that one of the applicants resides outside the City therefore is not eligible to serve on the board. **CM Minner** remarked that it is requirement that the applicants must reside inside the City in order to serve on the board.

Commissioner Robuck motioned to amend the resolution to remove Tracy Bronson and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

The roll call vote on the amendment was:

Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission approved the amendment.

The roll call vote on Resolution as amended was:

Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution as amended.

3. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida relating to the provision of Fire Protection Services, Facilities and Programs in the City of Leesburg, Florida; Imposing Fire Protection Assessments against assessed property located within the City for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2021; Approving the Rate of Assessment; Approving the Assessment Roll; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 10,877

Commissioner Robuck introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Burry made motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Robuck seconded the motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Burry stated he spoke with the City Manager earlier and with the exemptions we have mobile home parks, RV parks and churches. He asked for a brief explanation of the exemptions for clarity.

CM Minner stated he cannot remember exactly when the City implemented the fire assessment fee; however, he believes it was fiscal year 2014/2015. At that time the commission had some pretty detailed discussions with some compromises where ultimately the way we moved forwarded with adopting the fire assessment fee, it was imbedded with three exemption categories that have historically continued through. As part of the statutes with the fire assessment fee we have to adopt it every year by resolution prior to its implementation. We have only increased the fee once, when we originally adopted the fire assessment fee the equivalent residential unit price was about $57 dollars annually, but last year it increased to $87 dollars. That is the only change that we have made and each year the exemptions are the same and those exemptions are in this document. The fees are the same as fiscal year 2021 and the exemptions stay the same; sanctuary churches (church sanctuary square footage areas are only exempt), some low to moderate income families, and vacant mobile home park property is exempt. The first two are political compromises and the third was a recommendation from the consultant, which helped us adopt the program whereby we bill based on the number of mobile homes the same as an equivalent family rate; so we would bill a single property owner of a mobile home park what we think their total number of mobile homes are. If they have vacancies they are required to provide us proof that those areas are vacant. It puts the notice on the owner to declare that they have vacancies otherwise they are paying full freight. That is basically how it is written and that is the exemptions we have been rolling with that for five to six years now. **Commissioner Connell** questioned if mobile homes are paying. **CM Minner** replied yes, they are paying and if there is a vacancy; for example, if that park has fifty mobile homes they pay fifty times the ERU and if they only have forty eight spots they have to contact us to prove they have two empty spots. **Commissioner Connell** inquired if there is a timeframe for being empty in order to qualify for the exemption. **CM Minner** replied that has not come up since we have been doing this; however, if they sent us an exemption, they would send us a letter and we would go back and review it. If it comes back vacant we give them the exemption. **Commissioner Connell** asked if we verify that it is vacant through Customer Service. **CM Minner** said that since this has been imposed we have not received an exemption request on a mobile home park.

Commissioner Robuck commented that he votes against this every year because he does not like the exemption for churches, this was a political compromise and quite frankly he does not believe this is allowed under State Statute, but that has never been challenged. There was no reason to do this other than to make people happy, which he thinks was a terrible reason because they provide services just like everyone else. To him the one benefit of a fire assessment is to ad valorem, which everyone pays regardless of your profit verses nonprofit status because nonprofits do eat up a lot of services, as well as provide them, so if anyone wants to add it back he is fine with that otherwise he will be voting no. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** asked if the only nonprofit class in the fire exemption was for churches. **CM Minner** replied yes. **Commissioner Burry** stated that it is important to note how much revenue is generated from this. **CM Minner** pointed out that it is one point five million. **Commissioner Robuck** added they could generate one point six if they taxed churches.

The roll call vote was:
Commissioner Connell Yes
Commissioner Robuck No
Commissioner Burry Yes
Mayor Pro Tem Pederson Yes

Four yeas, one nay, the Commission adopted the resolution.

4. Discussion Item on Rails to Trails Funding

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson stated he requested this item be added to the agenda to discuss the Rails to Trails funding.

CM Minner stated this is more of a directional type item. The Rails to Trails issue has been around the community for a long time and this particular year the Rails to Trails issue has picked up because he has been getting a lot of requests about the City making Rails to Trails a priority for funding. Obviously, everyone has seen the request of about half a million dollars to study the trails and many cities have seen them being a benefit and a good recreational pull into the community. They are obviously supported by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Leesburg has been encouraged to participate and the request of this body has been to fund them. His recommendation was to go ahead for fiscal year 2022, starting October 1st, to go ahead and make an allocation. That allocation would come back to this body in a couple of different ways. First, that is a huge request half a million dollars; however, we would recommend that be funded with the American Recovery Act Grant funds. He does believe that would be an eligible expense as far as a revenue item and an expense item in 2022. We have the money through those funds and if it turns out that we cannot use those funds for that item we would come back and revisit that. Secondly, those funds are pretty significant; we do have the dollars to spread around and we do have that item coming back in the form of discussion whether that is on the recruitment process for an RFP that would go out as an expense approval so we are not writing a blank check this evening, but at least we are putting it in the budget and we are hearing the request that is coming from the community. It still gives you ample time to review it and ask questions before we actually have to stroke checks. **Commissioner Connell** asked what else that grant could be used for. **CM Minner** answered with that grant being an American Recovery grant, we are slated to get about ten million dollars of those funds. There are still some unanswered questions on what those funds could be used for, but they can be used for infrastructure issues, water/sewer extensions, broadband extensions, extensions of grants to businesses or persons affected by Covid. We are going to receive a request from the Boys and Girls Club to use some of those funds to help them with operating expenses for their first couple of years, which is an eligible request. These funds can be used for anything that has been affected by Covid, along with some infrastructure issues, which is what the American Recovery Act is slatted for. We have not had any discussions to date, so that is what he would like to do as we get into the budget timeframe and since we have not received a check yet, even though some of the larger communities have, we just have not received any funds to date. We are slatted to receive those funds, but he would like to start discussions on this now and as we move into budgeting. **Commissioner Connell** pointed out that if it is slatted to be used for Covid related activities, how do the trails fit into that. **CM Minner** commented that it falls under the infrastructure category. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** said he was the one that asked to have this put on the agenda and two of the Commissioners listened to a presentation about it from the Rails to Trails group. That president, Michael Stephens, is present and he wonders if the Commission would like hear from Mr. Stephens on this issue. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** asked to have this put on the agenda and with the budget hearings coming up next month he thought it was a good chance to get the Commission educated on this and obviously he is a supporter. **Commissioner Robuck** stated he spoke with Mr. Stephens, along with Mr. Woods at the MPO, and he does not have a problem with this on the budget. He is more excited about the Lake Denham Trail than the other two because whenever it comes down to it we would have the ability to hook into The Villages and that could drive a lot of actual traffic into Leesburg's downtown more so than the other two even though it is further out. He recommends staff have these conversations with The Villages now to see what this might look like even before we decide to fund it to see where we could connect before this area gets developed because this is time critical.

Mike Stephens, Lake One Hundred and Trails Committee and Lake Friends of the Lake County Trails, stated they have had preliminary discussions with some folks at The Villages and they were going to take that information back to their family to try and discuss where a good place would be to bring the trails from 470 into The Villages, so that discussion is ongoing and is continuous. They have not heard back in terms of where they would like it because there are some alternate developments going on down there in terms of what they normally do. They have started those discussions, but it might be a good idea for the Commission to meet with that family to try and figure out where it would be best to put that trail on the 470 property. He knows the County wants to pull into PEAR Park and connect PEAR Park as well as go down 470, but what we are really trying to do is connect the downtown Leesburg trails. Since Leesburg has done such a great job with building local trails and interior trails we would want to connect those to regional trails to show the benefit and bring in the economic impact that those trails can do. We are trying to bring these trails up north into Marion County as well as connect them to 466A and 466 going west over to Sumter County and into The Villages that would be the Gardenia Trail. The Project Development & Environment Study (PD&E) that has been talked about and the Tav-Lee Trail update to the PD&E Study would take it east and connect it with the Wekiva Trail. The Wekiva Trail is being constructed right now and will connect into Seminole and Orange counties; connecting the Coast to Coast Trail along with the Heart of Florida Loop Trail, which will lead right into Mount Dora, Tavares and hopefully Leesburg. If we can finish the Tav-Lee Trail and get that connected to the downtown Leesburg Trails, that would be the second PD&E Study, to finish getting that connection on the Tav-Lee Trail. Then the third is Lake Denham, going down south to the 470 area as well as PEAR Park. We are trying to get the local interior trails for Leesburg to shine and show their potential because right now they are local trails. Even though local trails are great for communities and connecting communities for that kind of thing, in order to have that economic impact you need to have longer trails that are connected to regional trails where people can actually come and spend the day or spend the night. Those are the folks who will spend a lot more money and stay longer in your community. They are the folks that come to use the trails; they are the ones who bike forty to fifty mile trails and they will spend about four times as much as your local users just by using the trails as opposed to the folks that live right here. The folks that come and spend the night will spend about eight times as much and that is what we are trying to accomplish. We want to get people on these longer trails, we want to get them into Leesburg either from The Villages or from Marion County. We would like to take this trail north and if we can take it up into Marion County we could connect with the cross Florida Greenway Trail, which connects with the Heart of Florida Loop , going all the way around Central Florida, and just one park up there across the Florida Greenway has eighty-five miles of mountain bike trails and fifteen miles of paved trails. It is actually a State Park and it brings in over two hundred and sixty four million dollars as a State Park every year to the State of Florida in terms of economic impact and most of that is located in Marion County just south of Ocala and Belleview. That is what we are trying to do here, make these trails regional trails, connect them to downtown Leesburg, and to the Leesburg area with the trails that have already been constructed.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson commented for the Commissions benefit that it was his understanding that the PD&E study has to be funded or a governmental entity and once we get past this stage all the funding or a majority of it is pretty much through the State and grant money. **Mr. Stephens** answered that FDOT used to fund the Feasibility and PD&E studies; and those were the first two steps in developing a trail.

Then about two years ago, FDOT quit doing that and now they are requiring the local entities to come up with the money for the feasibility and PD&E studies. Then you will be put on the list of priority projects with the MPO, which you are already on. Once you get past that, then the MPO can start looking for State and Federal money, along with grants to fund the trails. You will be competing with other trails in the same area once you get past the PD&E phase. You will move to design, then the right of way and construction, but at least you will know you have made it past that hurdle and you then become eligible for State and Federal funds. **Commissioner Connell** asked what the State and Federal will pay in terms of the actual cost to install. **Mr. Stephens** responded that most of the time it is the full cost of the project. You would get listed on the list of priority projects, then move from there to get State and Federal funding for the design of the right of way and construction. **Commissioner Connell** asked if that was 100% or matching. **Mr. Stephens** answered that he would have to ask the MPO, but from what he has seen and understands, it has all been State of Florida money. The State of Florida is paying for the Wekiva Trails, they are paying for the Coast to Coast Trails, the River to Sea Trail, along with the Heart of Florida Loop Trail. All that money is coming from the Sun Trail fund, which is money that goes into the vehicle registrations that we all pay into. **Commissioner Robuck** commented he is not a trail person, but he was under the impression that the Gardenia Trail already went all the way to the Fruitland Park city border. **Mr. Stephens** remarked that he is not sure exactly where it stops and where the City limits are, but it is very close. **Commissioner Robuck** said he thought it was a done deal, so wonders why we would do a PD&E study on it if it already exists. **Mr. Stephens** responded it would continue north on up, but again he does not know where it actually ends. **Commissioner Robuck** said we really need to figure that out, because maybe Fruitland Park is the one who needs to do the PD&E because we may already be done with our portion. **Mr. Stephens** says it does not quite get there, but again he does not know where the City limits are and that is something where you may want to get with Fruitland Park and Lady Lake. He knows Umatilla is having a meeting next week with Eustis on the design of the River to Hills Trail, which will be a north/south regional trail that they are now starting to work on together. The more you work together, the more you can build a momentum, the more you can build the MPO and it can be recognized by FDOT because they understand how much the desire and demand is there for the trail. He recommended contacting Fruitland Park and Lady Lake along with all the surrounding Cities to work together on this.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson commented that we could slow Gardenia Trail down a bit, but the Tav-Lee and Lake Denham Trails are clearly going to fall on the City of Leesburg. **Mr. Stephens** commented that the Tav-Lee Trail is an extension of the existing Tav-Lee Trail that ends around the mall. We need to bring that into downtown Leesburg and there are a couple of options to do that. We have a Silver Lake option to go around Silver Lake and they have a Sunny Hills option to go through Sunny Hills. We have a number of different options on the original PD&E study and that is the big trail right now that is getting a lot of focus. The City of Mount Dora, Lake County and the City of Tavares are all in a Tri-Party agreement and have applied for a twenty five million dollar grant from the federal government to buy the railroad right of way and the railroad operating lease from Sorrento into Mount Dora. They want to go ahead and get that built. They actually received two million dollars in funding from the State this year from appropriations to do the design work on that trail. They received two million dollars to do the construction on the Green Mountain connector, which is south of there as well. They also received four million dollars to bring the Sorrento section of the Wekiva Trail from where it ends now at Hojons Street on into the Sorrento east Lake County park, which brings it closer to Mount Dora. So there are a lot of things happening with the Wekiva Trail and that again will connect Leesburg to Tavares, Tavares to Mount Dora, and Mount Dora to Seminole County on into Orange County to the Coast to Coast Trail, which is a two hundred and fifty mile trail across the State as well as the Heart of Florida Loop, which is a two hundred and seventy five mile loop around the central Florida area. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** stated he personally ranks the Tav-Lee Trail as the first option, the Lake Denham Trail second, and then the Gardenia Trail because that one could be put on hold to see what The Villages has to say along with

Fruitland Park and Lady Lake. He knows we are not voting on this tonight, but we are just getting this out in front of the Commission as we go into the budget process. **Commissioner Connell** commented before this comes up for a vote that he would like to know what kind of funding is available and if it is a matching fund or a flat amount. He would also like to know what it is going to pay before we go out and spend five hundred thousand dollars on a project and find out that we do not want to spend that kind of money to even do it. **Mayor Pro Tem Pederson** said he respects that comment entirely and how he bought into this was we cannot even get to the table unless we have the PD&E study, so we are just sitting on the sidelines and this would at least get us into the game, but of course there are risks. **Commissioner Connell** said he is fine with the discussions and coming up with spending the possible five hundred thousand, but he would want to know what kind of funding sources are out there to do this before we spend the five hundred thousand to find out its a fifty/fifty match or it is an eight million dollar project. **Mr. Stephens** stated he sits on the CAC committee, Community Advisory Council, that used to be known as the BPAC, Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and he has not seen a matching fund like that when it has gone to the design, the right of way, and funding stages. It has all been State or Federal money, but Mike Woods would be better to answer that question because he is not on the MPO side of that.

7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS:
The following reports are provided to the Commission in accordance with the Charter/Ordinances. No action required.

A. None

8. CITY ATTORNEY ITEMS:

CA Morrison had nothing this evening.

9. CITY MANAGER ITEMS:

CM Minner had nothing this evening.

10. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Burry stated that there was a discussion last week where we were talking about the overall need for workforce and affordable housing. We also talked about the fifty-five and up housing. With being the new guy, he would like to know what the game plan is for the community as far as what kind of mix we are looking to create. He thinks we need to talk about the direction we would like to go. He has talked to the the City Manager a little bit about this, but he would like to look at what we have done in the last ten years and where we are going. Even if for himself he would like to have an idea of where we are going because it would make decision making much easier because you do not go into a football game not knowing what the game plan is and he does not really know what the game plan is the City. **Commissioner Robuck** stated that is a great idea because it can be not only frustrating for us, but for the people on the other side who are coming in to generally oppose every development and the comment we always get is we are always for development just not this one. That is okay and fine, but what developments are we for and where should they be, what areas are they going to be for, are they targeting higher end housing and where does the workforce housing go. Having an idea of what that looks like makes a lot of sense and should help with some of the push back that the idea that the only thing that can go in any area of Leesburg is exactly what is already there, because that is what it boils down to in the comments. It has to be frustrating on their side to have no idea what we might put anywhere, so it is a great idea to spend some time talking about that. **CM Minner** added to help the Commission in gaining a general direction of where you want to go with growth, obviously he thinks everyone knows by now the Commission has been requested by the County Commission to have a joint meeting about growth as a catalyst from the latest subdivision. In any case, what he will try to do, at the staff level, is put this as an item to reintroduce some of the concepts that came out from different ISBA ideas as they have circulated in history. Let you guys have general discussions before the County Commission in a larger discussion about growth and hopefully from that, through some of that input and discussion items, staff will gain a little bit of direction of where we want to head with respect to growth and tailor our work and recommendations around what we would project the consensus of the Commission to be. He heard back from the County Manager after the County Commissions passage of that resolution about the meeting and we are in the process of comparing notebooks and calendars so he will try to squeeze in a discussion and get with the the Planning Manager on the chronology and input to have a larger discussion. We will get that agenda on an easy meeting date, which is a hard topic to discuss.

Commissioner Connell had nothing.

Commissioner Robuck added to just remind the County that we all have other jobs because they like to have their meetings in the middle of the day, we have ours a little later and that would be great. He hopes everyone has a great Fourth of July, the Partnership is hosting a great event down at Ski Beach, and at the boat basin there will be a lot of fireworks and all sorts of good stuff. That will be exciting and he hopes everyone turns out for that.

Mayor Pro Tem Pederson had nothing.

11. ADJOURN:

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES NEEDING ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THESE PROCEEDINGS SHOULD CONTACT THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, ADA COORDINATOR, AT 728-9740, 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING.

F.S.S. 286.0105 "If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Commission with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based." The City of Leesburg does not provide this verbatim record.

The meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m.