

**REGULAR MEETING
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
MARCH 4, 2024
CITY HALL ANNEX COUNCIL CHAMBERS
6:00 PM**

The Council of the City of Destin met in regular session with the following members and staff present:

Destin City Council

Mayor Bobby Wagner

Councilmember Torey Geile

Councilmember Johnny King

Councilmember John Stephens

Councilmember Terésa Hebert

Councilmember Jim Bagby

Councilmember Kevin Schmidt

Destin City Staff

Interim City Manager Louis Zunguze

City Engineer Ryan Scott

Public Information Director Tamara Young

Finance Director Krystal Strickland

Projects/Grants/Contract Manager Jeffrey Cozadd

City Attorney Kimberly Kopp

City Clerk Rey Bailey

Parks/Recreation Director Lisa Firth

IT Director Andy Peters

Principal Planner Steve O'Connor

Code Compliance Director Troy Williams

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bobby Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Pastor Steve Farris of the First Baptist Church of Destin gave the invocation, which was then followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion by Councilmember Hebert, seconded by Councilmember Stephens, to approve the agenda passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted "yes"; Councilmember Destin was absent from the meeting).

PROCLAMATIONS / RECOGNITIONS / SPECIAL / PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Flood Awareness Week - March 4-10, 2024

The mayor read the proclamation designating the week of March 4, 2024, as Flood Awareness Week for the City of Destin, and then presented it to Public Works Director Michael Burgess.

B. Tourist Development Council (TDC) Updates

Tourist Development Director Jennifer Adams provided an update on tourism activities, comparing data to 2019 to assess growth. The report included visitor numbers, economic impacts, and initiatives to improve visitor experiences. Highlights included investments in local communities, beach safety programs, coastal resource management, and the strategic marketing plan aimed at attracting families and nurturing the adventurous spirit in children. The efforts to incorporate destination stewardship and innovative program like the Little Adventures and Reel-Time Fishing were notable, reflecting a forward-thinking approach to tourism that balances economic benefits with environmental conservation and community well-being.

- **Tourism Growth:** Compared 2023 to 2019, highlighting a 6.5% increase in visitors and a significant rise in direct spending to the economy.
- **Strategic Marketing:** Focused on attracting families, enhancing beach safety, and promoting outdoor adventures as key attractions.
- **Destination Stewardship:** Detailed initiatives for coastal resource management, including artificial reef programs and water quality testing.
- **Convention Center and Fairgrounds:** Discussed the economic impact and the efforts to grow group business beyond just the convention center, including sports tourism.
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** Noted the competitive travel market and the importance of engaging potential visitors early in their planning stages.

Slide Presentation

2023 Impact

Number of Visitors:

2019 - 7.3 million
2020 - 6 million
2021 - 8.3 million
2022 - 7.9 million
2023 - 7.8 million

Visitors Spend Locally:

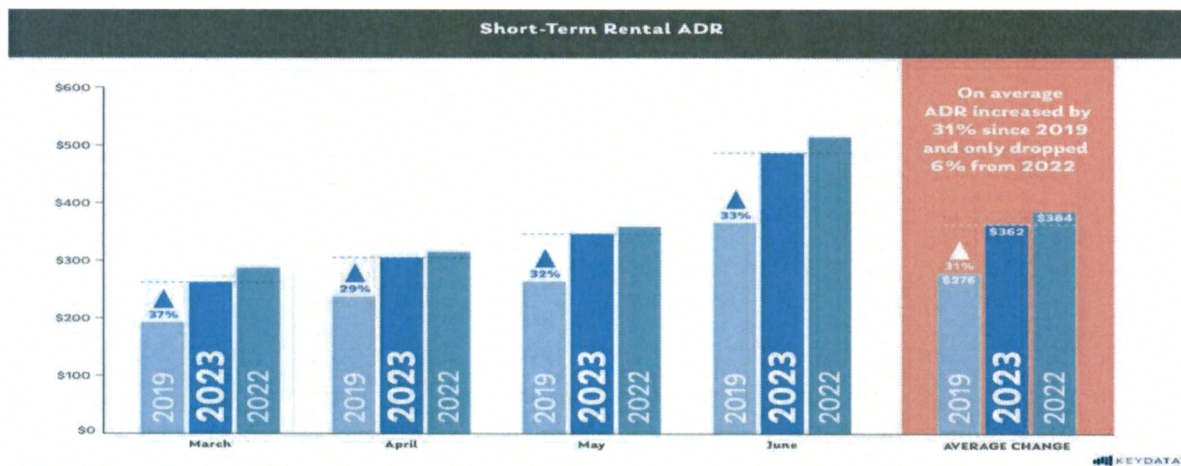
2019 - \$574 million
2021 - \$735 million
2022 - \$755 million
2023 - \$734 million

COUNTY-WIDE TOURISM NUMBER OF UNITS/BREAKDOWN

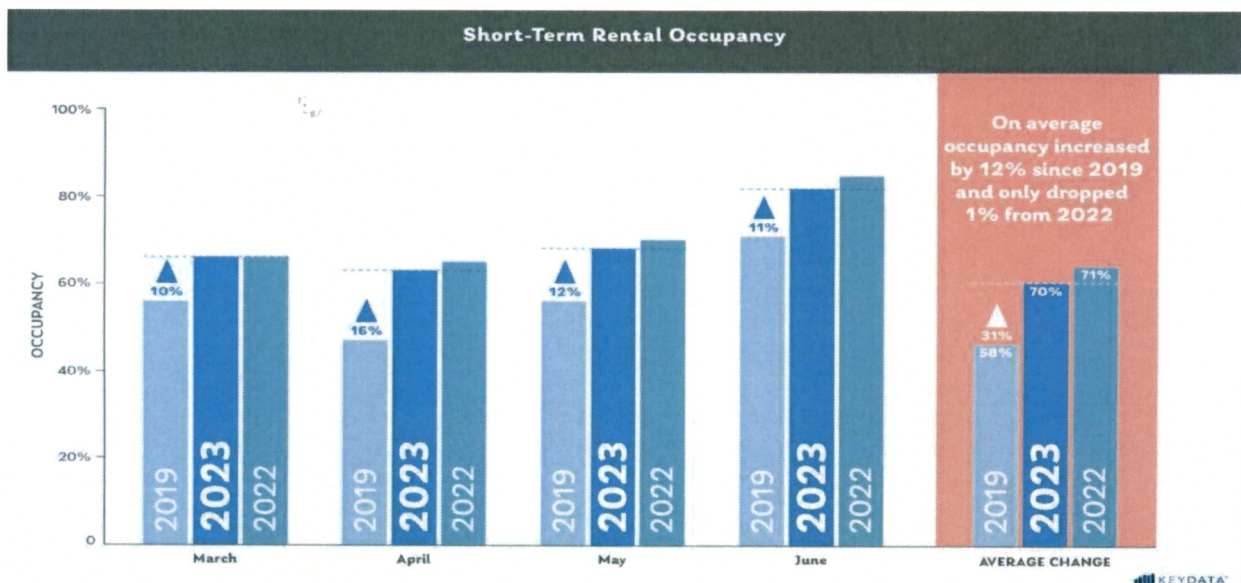
15,497 total units

	Subdistrict	Expansion
Condo	7,381	17
Hotel/Motel	4,559	1,841
Vacation Rental	1,388	241
Other	40	30
Total	13,368	2,129

Short-Term Rental ADR:

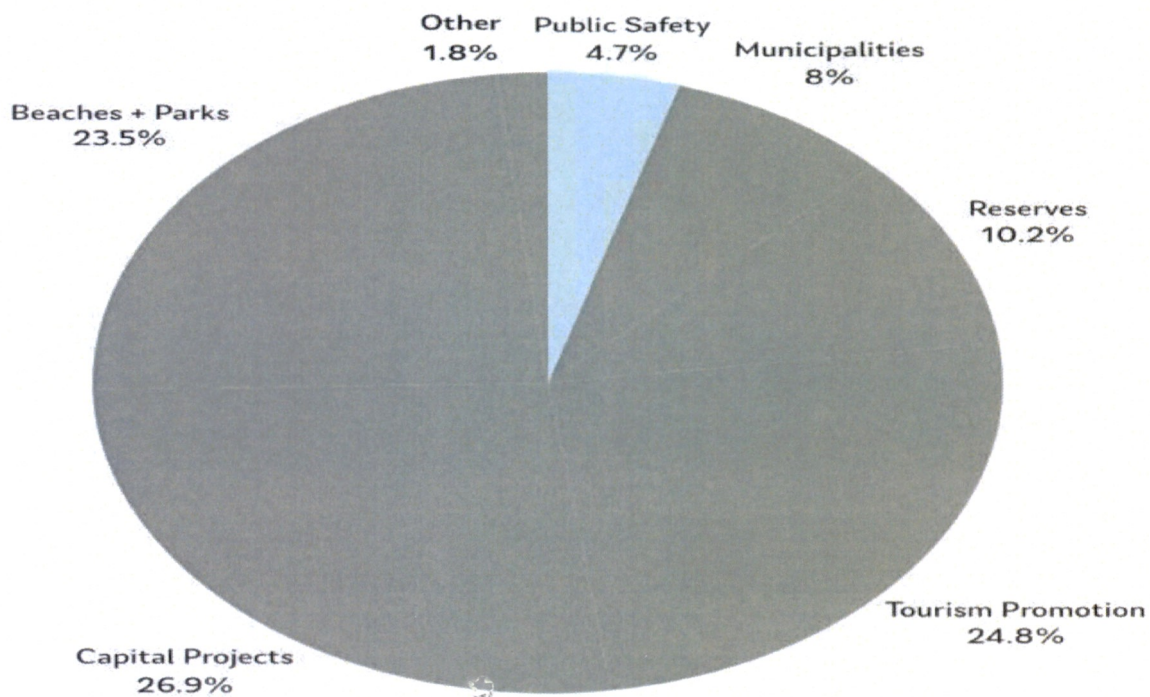


Short-Term Rental Occupancy



MUNICIPALITIES	FY 2022	FY 2023	SPEND TO DATE
CINCO BAYOU	\$70,123	\$92,417	\$0
CRESTVIEW	\$403,205	\$531,399	\$14,500
DESTIN	\$1,700,472	\$1,491,115	\$864,077
FORT WALTON BEACH	\$631,103	\$831,754	\$7,197
LAUREL HILL	\$35,061	\$46,209	\$0
MARY ESTHER	\$175,306	\$231,043	\$340,127
NICEVILLE	\$350,613	\$462,086	\$0
SHALIMAR	\$52,592	\$69,313	\$71,422
VALPARAISO	\$87,653	\$115,521	\$0
	\$3,506,128	\$3,870,857	\$1,297,323

Public Safety:



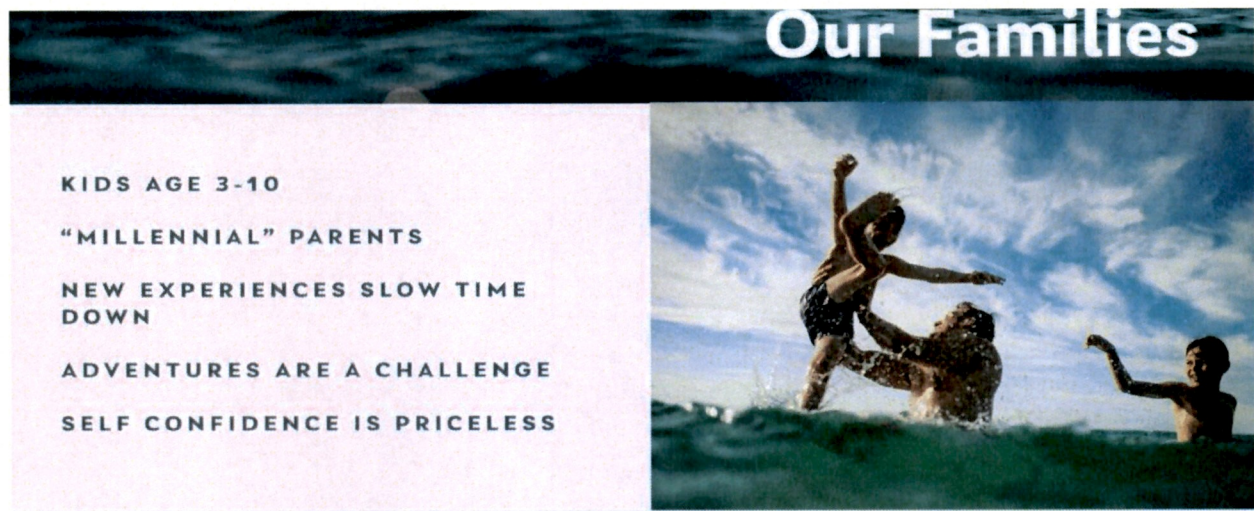
Convention Center

Economic Impact:

4.6 million – Annual direct spending
 6.6 million – Annual Total Impact
 145, 000 – Annual Sales + Lodging Tax Revenues
 1.9 million – Annual Earnings (approx. 60 jobs)

2024 Strategic Marketing Plan

Mission: Make time spent here, whether visiting, living, or working, more valuable to all.



Strategy

Create interest and help more families commit to Destin-Fort Walton Beach during their inspiration and research phase.

Quality Volume

- 20% to national Goggle effort to "grab the interested"
- Broadcast in more core markets.

- Consider digital placements on OTAs and other top funnel sites.
- Start earlier. Families are already planning. Test and refine.

C. Destin Little League – Presentation

Ms. Betsy Smith, representing the Destin Little League, outlined the league's history, its significance to the community, and the collaboration with the city for the use and improvement of Threadgill Park and Morgan Sports Complex, noting recent upgrades, including new batting cages and enhanced park aesthetics. She stated that the city has been instrumental in the installation of new hand dryers, painting all the foul poles, and supporting field preparation. The city also generously donated a John Deere Gator to replace an aging tractor. In preparation for the upcoming season, the league has invested significant resources in enhancing the facilities. Buildings have been painted, new epoxy flooring placed on bathrooms, new ice machines on concession stands, and pressure washed the entire park. Ms. Smith also conveyed the league's request for planning a significant upgrade to Threadgill Park and updating the lease agreement with the city to reflect maintenance responsibilities and park usage. Understanding that a part of the city's vision is to create a comprehensive park plan for Threadgill Park, Destin Little League is eager and ready to contribute a substantial amount of funding towards this vision. One that would elevate the park to new heights.

Councilmember Hebert moved to direct the City Manager and staff to work with Destin Little League, Inc. on continuing the collaboration and partnership to plan large upgrades and work to update lease; seconded by Councilmember King. Motion passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted "yes")

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS

2. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Resolution 24-05 - Destin's Independence Day Fireworks Approval
- B. Gulf Shore Drive Extension Construction Agreement-3rd Amendment (to April 30, 2024)
- C. Approval of minutes of February 5, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting

Motion by Councilmember Hebert, seconded by Councilmember Stephens, to approve Consent Agenda items 3A through 3C, as printed above, passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted "yes").

3. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

A. Destin Youth Council - Workplans

Youth Council Chair Briar Ramswell requested the council's approval to move forward with the following youth council initiatives:

- 1. Youth council-sponsored beach cleanup effort. This would include:

- a. Identifying the cleanup sites to make sure that volunteers can safely access the site.
 - b. Choosing an event coordinator to organize and keep everything on track before, during, and after the event.
 - c. Gathering supplies – trash bags, first aid kit, hand sanitizers, water, gloves sunscreen, etc.
 - d. Get volunteers to help. Recruit friends, family, neighbors.
2. Recycling Program Expansion aimed at implementing and enhancing recycling systems at Destin High School, Destin Middle School, and Destin Elementary School to foster environmental stewardship and emphasize environmental consciousness among students.

Youth Council member Estella Scoma noted that teachers and students are constantly throwing away leftover handouts and papers, when it is extremely apparent how much of this trash could be saved. For instance, Destin High School serves approximately 370 lunches in plastic, paper, and cardboard containers weekly. The youth council believes that having a recycling system would greatly benefit the school. She also noted that the youth council has surveyed staff, teachers, and administration at all three schools and received about 50 responses. About 98% of individuals surveyed stated that they would be in support of implementing a recycling program, and 83% of those believes it is a valuable investment.

Motion by Councilmember Hebert, seconded by Councilmember Geile, to approve the Destin Youth Council work plans passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted “yes”)

- B. RFP 23-13-PW Paid Parking Solution, authorization to negotiate and execute a 3-year contract

The city council and staff discussed proposals from 9 vendors for managing the city’s paid parking facilities. Park Mobile was recommended by the city’s Bid Committee for a 3-year contract negotiation based on their comprehensive service offerings and cost-effectiveness compared to the current vendor, Passport Labs, Inc.

Councilmember Schmidt noted that the RFP package expressed the desire for service that utilizes license plate recognition technology for monitoring and enforcement of parking operations including digital chalking and integration with DMV and related platforms. He asked whether Park Mobile can offer this technology.

Public Works Director Michael Burgess stated that if Park Mobile is selected by the council, staff will make sure to discuss this matter with them during the negotiation process; adding that the negotiated contract will go back to the council for approval.

Councilmember Hebert asked whether they could negotiate a two-year or a one-year contract rather than 3 years so that they are not locked in for that amount of time in case they are not happy with the contract.

Mr. Burgess explained that traditionally they have created a contract for one-year with 4 annual renewals; but there would always be a termination clause to the contracts they execute.

Councilmember Bagby stated that he would have preferred to see a one-page spreadsheet listing all the proposers with the cost and specific services they offer rather than copies of hundreds of pages of bid submittal from each individual firm; adding that it would give the council a better idea as to how staff arrived at their decision.

Councilmember Schmidt pointed out that the bid submittal from Park Mobile included a statement that, *"Park Mobile does not provide a license plate recognition solution; however, we have over 100 active industry integrations and are able to integrate with enforcement and license plate recognition provider of the city's choice."* He stated that since the city does not have anything in place at this time whether the city will be expected to provide the system and integrating with that system would be a separate fee.

Mr. Burgess stated that this matter will be included in the conversation with Park Mobile if they are selected tonight.

Councilmember Schmidt expressed the desire to delay their decision until they are sure of the exact services to be provided by Park Mobile.

Motion by Councilmember Schmidt, seconded by Councilmember Hebert, to table this item to the next council meeting passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted "yes")

C. Paid Parking Fees and Taxes - Direction from Council

The City's current and proposed paid parking vendors charge fees for their services, which include a transaction fee as well as a merchant fee associated with electronic payments. In addition, the City must pay Sales Tax (7%) for these transactions to the State of Florida. The council and staff deliberated on whether the city should absorb transaction fees, merchant service fees, and state taxes associated with paid parking, or pass these costs onto users. Staff seek the council's direction on the assignment of these fees and taxes utilizing one of the following 3 options:

1. The end-user (parker) pays the transaction fee, applicable merchant processing fees, and sales tax as part of the transaction. The city would then pay the State sales tax as normal.
2. The end-user (parker) pays only the transaction fee and applicable merchant processing fees. The city would pay the sales tax.
3. The City pays all fees and sales tax for each transaction.

Councilmember Stephens moved to direct the City Manager to utilize Option 1 with the selected contractor during contract negotiations; seconded by Councilmember Hebert. Motion passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted "yes")

D. Fuel and Pollutant Abatement Plan

Principal Planner Steve O'Connor provided the following explanation of this item:

In February 2024, the Harbor and Waterways Board hosted the local Coast Guard Commander to explain how the Coast Guard facilitates, manages, and tracks how entities develop and record their Fuel and Pollution Spill Plans. From that discussion, the Harbor & Waterways Board recommended that Staff develop a standardized Fuel & Pollutant Abatement Plan for all Commercial Marine activity users and marinas. Staff took the Coast Guard's document, 'FDEP Discharge Contingency Plan' and developed a Destin specific plan in consultation with the Harbor & Waterways Board. There were items and elements the Board recommended adding, which are outlined in the staff report, based on the disparity between the Fuel Abatement Plans the City currently accepts. The difference between the two plans is vast and highlights the need for a standard document that gives the city adequate information to ensure each commercial marine entity is properly following procedures to mitigate any accidental spill or discharge into the waters of Destin. Further, it ensures the facility managers have all the information necessary to activate the plan in case of a discharge. The intent of the plan is to ensure users of the waters of Destin are doing so in a responsible and environmentally sound manner and to ensure the employees of each entity are educated on the plan and how to activate it. The plan specifically gives the users the information on who to contact in the event of a discharge. The City of Destin is not listed on the immediate contact list since they do not have the responsibility nor the capability to respond to such an event. But there is an after-the fact requirement to contact the city if they do not already know about the event.

After a brief discussion, Councilmember Stephens moved to adopt the Fuel & Pollutant Abatement Plan with the following modifications:

- 1. Require livery facilities starting for 2025 season, sending livery and property owner notifications in September 2024 of the new changes.**
- 2. All current and future commercial and multi-residential marine facilities, excluding single-residentials, voluntarily in 2025, required by 2026, sending property owners notification in September 2024 of new changes.**

Councilmember Hebert provided a second to the motion, which passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted "yes")

E. Dolphin Point- Public Parking Removal Request and Project Update

Item moved to the next city council meeting.

F. Draft Minutes of Standing Board & Committees - For Information Only

G. Announcements

1. Early voting for the Presidential Preference Primary will be held at the Destin Community Center from March 9-16, from 10 AM to 6 PM each day.
2. The city will be hosting the Destin Forward Class on Thursday, March 14th.

3. The LDC rewrite program continues to progress. Articles 1-5 have been published, and Article 6 – General Development recently uploaded on the city’s website.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4. COMMENTS / PRESENTATIONS FROM MAYOR, COUNCIL, AND CITY ATTORNEY

- A. Councilmember Stephens
- B. Councilmember Geile

Councilmember Geile moved for the council to appoint him as the legislative sponsor for the Destin High School as it relates to their sports facilities and the use of city parks including the Morgan Sports Complex. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Hebert and passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted “yes”)

- C. Councilmember Destin
- D. Councilmember Bagby
- E. Councilmember Hebert
- F. Councilmember King
- G. Councilmember Schmidt

Councilmember Schmidt moved to direct city staff to present a plan by April or May to publicize and encourage more people to attend and participate in city council meetings, seconded by Councilmember Hebert. Motion passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted “yes”)

Councilmember Schmidt also requested that the fee schedule for the Parks and Recreation be provided to the council within the next two months.

- H. Mayor Wagner
- 1) Annexation

Councilmember Hebert moved to direct the City Manager and City Attorney to draft the documentation for the referendum and present any financial, legal and other aspects of annexation; seconded by Councilmember Stephens.

Councilmember Bagby recommends they conduct a survey of the different segments of the unincorporated area they intend to annex into the city and exclude any section that is 100 percent against the annexation.

Motion passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted “yes”)

- I. City Attorney
- 1) Beach Acquisitions

The City Attorney reported that the owner's current asking price for the White House property is at \$6.6 million, stating that this is his final offer. As to the potential land swap of a city property with the property at 2968, Scenic Hwy 98 East, Mr. Knowles, the owner of the latter has upgraded the property swap price to \$100,000. She asked for the council's direction as to which option to pursue at this time.

Councilmember King expressed his desire to pursue the property swap rather than purchasing the White House property at this time, and to determine if there is a chance to purchase the other property outright.

According to the Finance Director, purchasing the other property outright and selling the city's property could result in net revenue.

Councilmember Schmidt moved to engage the property owner (Mr. Knowles) with the swap option and a potential option for the city to purchase his property outright as well as the potential purchase price for the property, and not dealing with the White House property at this time. Councilmember Hebert provided a second to the motion which passed 6-0 (Council members Schmidt, King, Hebert, Bagby, Geile, and Stephens voted "yes")

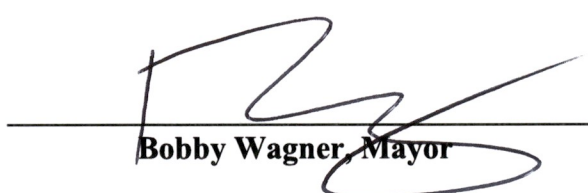
5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

ATTEST:


Rey Bailey, City Clerk


Bobby Wagner, Mayor