

MINUTES
STRATEGIC VISIONING SESSION
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
JANUARY 25, 2021
8:00 AM

The Mayor and Council for the City of Destin met in special session in the Destin City Hall Annex Council Chambers with the following members and staff present:

Destin City Council

Mayor Gary Jarvis

Councilmember Kevin Schmidt

Councilmember Rodney Braden

Councilmember Johnny King

Councilmember Terésa Hebert

Councilmember Skip Overdier

Councilmember Prebble Ramswell

Councilmember Dewey Destin

Destin City Staff

City Manager Lance Johnson

City Clerk Rey Bailey

City Engineer Donald Smith

Public Info Officer Catherine Card

Code Compliance Manager Joey Forgione

Deputy Public Services Director John Hart

Community Dev. Director Louis Zunguze

Principal Planner Lauren Witt

Library Director Wen Livingston

Land Use Attorney Kimberly Kopp

Deputy City Manager Webb Warren

Parks/Recreation Director Lisa Firth

Public Services Director Michael Burgess

HR Manager Karen Jankowski

IT Specialist James Lauria

IT Manager Matthew Pace

Building Official Noell Bell

Finance Director Krystal Strickland

City Attorney Kyle Bauman

Facilitator

Buz Eddy

1. Welcome/Introduction – Overview of the Day

The City Manager and lead facilitator Buz Eddy, provided a brief overview of the workshop, discussed its overall objective, and reinforced what needs to be accomplished during this time.

2. Review of Current Strategic Plan and Objectives

The City Manager discussed the following items:

a. Vision 2035

“Destin is a family – oriented beach and fishing community where people want to live, work & play and where guests are welcomed to respectfully enjoy our community and its resources.”

b. Core Values

- Transparency
- Teamwork
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Stewardship
- Respect

c. Mission (adopted in 2018)

“We are an organization that strives to provide a healthy, safe quality of life, balancing the needs of our residents with the expectations of our visitors, and providing open, clear, accurate communication.”

d. Strategic Plan Process

- Annual Visioning Session with City Council, staff and public
- Adoption of plan by Council
- Staff executes plan
- Final report/new visioning session (Plan-Do-Check-Act)

e. Strategic Focus – 2025

- Public beach initiative
- Transparent and equitable governance
- Financially sound city providing service value
- World class beach, fishing and harbor
- Improved mobility and connectivity
- High quality of life and safety for residents
- Quality development and revitalization through clear vision and unified approach

Deputy City Manager Webb Warren gave the following presentation:

f. Council Objectives – FY 2020 (in priority order)

- 1) Public Beach Initiative
 - Over \$22 million committed to this initiative. \$13.5 million funding from external sources (TDD)
 - 3 parcels under contract by TPL in Crystal Beach
 - Demolition bids received
 - TPL is pursuing other opportunities
- 2) Underground Utilities
 - Gulf Power franchise agreement being finalized
 - RFQ for undergrounding consultant
 - Bid protest settled
 - Contract is under negotiation
 - Funding resources being researched

- 3) Short-Term Rentals (STR) Compliance with Regulations
 - Total registered STRs – 1202
 - Total STR inspections – 975
 - STR parking violations – 506
 - STR garbage violations – 233
 - STR noise violations – 14
 - STR event violations – 14
 - STR stop work violation – 10
 - STR miscellaneous violations – 244

- 4) Recruit Project and Grants Manager
 - New position for FY 2020 – hire date: March 2, 2020
 - Organization created a Project Review Team (PRT) and process to improve project design and management
 - Helping to manage existing grants
 - \$10.25 million city administered
 - \$15.1 million administered by other agencies
 - \$16 million in potential co-administered grants
 - Chairs the re-vamped Bid Committee

- 5) Request TDC Funds for Additional OCSO Services
 - 2/26/20 – request sent to Council for input for TDC application
 - 4/8/20 – application submitted
 - 4/29/20 – COVID-19 Impacted future TDC budget. All new TDC requests were cut. Existing beach funding levels retained

- 6) Research Viability of Multi-Use Convention/Sports/Community Center
 - Workshop held on February 24, 2020
 - Pending Council direction and resources

- 7) Complete Two-Lane Crosstown Connector
 - Proposed two-lane crosstown connector presented and approved by Council on June 1, 2020
 - Redesign underway and process monitored by Project Review Team

- 8) Calhoun Avenue Multi-Use Trail – Phase I
 - Enhanced multi-use pathway from community center to Clement Taylor Park
 - Project has been approved by Council, has been awarded and notice to proceed issued
 - The project will begin February 1, 2021

- 9) Calhoun Avenue Multi-Use Trail – Phase II
 - Community Development completed identification of Scope of Work
 - Community Development Director and City Manager in the process of determining funding and timing of RFP for design phase

- 10) Improve Parking: Explore Options, Garage, and Surface
 - Beach parking zones activated July 1, 2020
 - Free resident beach parking passes are available
 - Paid parking revenue is earmarked for future parking solutions

- Program is freeing up parking spaces for intended use and preventing unintended use
 - Utilize harbor study/recommendations
- 11) Beach Renourishment, Planning and Schedule
- 2020 dredging operations provided emergency sand placement of approximately 193,310 cubic yards on Holiday Isle beaches
 - County contractors have compiled data from Hurricane Sally/beach erosion assessment. Report is forthcoming
 - Although no immediate and comprehensive renourishment plan is in place, the TDC and BOCC are researching options and is in regular communication with City administration
- 12) Improve Communications with Council/Public/Staff
- Council Task/Project Tracking Report
 - Regularly scheduled Council member briefings
 - Improved turnaround time for meeting minutes
 - Revamped project management processes
 - New website launch – March 2021
 - Website and social media metrics:
 - Since Oct 2019, there were over 369,400 visits to the/City of Destin website, over 10,000 “likes” on Facebook, and over 1,400 public engagement posts, 160 press releases distributed
 - Newsletter launched January 2021
- 13/14) Implement Wayfinding Program/Enhanced Signage Control
- Master plan reviewed and approved by City Council
 - TDD is planning a similar initiative and staff is in communication
- 15) Update Golf Cart/Low Speed Vehicle Rules
- This item is slated to be incorporated in the Land Development Code (Chapter 8)
 - To LPA in March 2021
- 16) Continuity of Streetlights/Conversion to LED
- Staff has recently completed the City’s first-ever GIS-based streetlight inventory
 - Based on current data, 98%+ of the City’s inventory is non-LED
 - The FDOT PD&E for US Hwy 98 was advertised in December of 2020, which includes a street-lighting evaluation
 - Based on a replacement estimate, conversion could approach \$1.2 million for material and installation (cost-distribution over a 5-year period, \$240,000/year)
 - Possible opportunity in renegotiation of Franchise Agreement with Gulf Power
- 17) Implement a Roadway Striping Program
- The Public Works Department has focused its re-striping efforts for FY 2020 and FY 2021 on collector-class streets only. In the past, City staff has ordered the optional striping and installation of raised pavement markers on “local” or neighborhood streets when those roadways have

been resurfaced. Based on estimates, restriping collector-class streets every 7 years will require approximately \$120,000 to be dedicated each year to keep this pace

- FY 2021 Projects – Gulf Shore Drive (Sandpiper Cove to Norriego Point), Scenic Hwy 98 (Tarpon-Matthew), Dolphin-Regatta Bay, Sibert Avenue

18) Provide Board and Committee Training to Members

- City Clerk and staff reviewed and are revising the City Council and Committee appointee orientation process
- The City Attorney is conducting annual Sunshine and Public Records refresher training with each board/committee

19) Improve Sidewalks (wider, more walkable)

- This initiative also includes providing a sustainable funding and planning process, improve ADA access as well as ensure sidewalks meet the LDC requirements
- During FY 2020, approximately 4613 square feet, the equivalent to 1150' of damaged 4' sidewalk, had been removed and replaced

20) Reestablish Environmental Committee

- Staff will bring forward an Environmental Committee agenda item for Council direction to re-establish the intent (need) of this committee

21) Enforce Residential Boat and RV Parking Regulations

- Officers are trained in these regulations and proactively seek compliance from our residents
- Code Compliance has issued 26 citations to date in 2020

22) Regulate Building Height Limits to Five Stories

- November 3, 2020 referendum election – approved by 82.% of voters

g. Management Objectives – FY 2020 (Listed in Priority Order)

- Balance Staffing Resources with Expectations
 - City Manager's Staff – Realignment for improved process management
 - Reopened and filled the Grants/Projects/Contracts Manager position
 - Code Compliance – Increased staffing based upon Council's strategic priorities
 - Increased from 4 employees to 8.5 over three FY (1-Mgr / 6.5 – Officers / 1-AA)
 - Community Development – Increased staffing based upon Council's strategic priorities
 - Planning Division: Increased from 3 employees to 5 over two FY
 - Building/Permit Division: Adding Permit/BTR Technician and Inspector
 - Engineering Division

- Realignment for improved process management: Engineering and Stormwater moved under Community Development Department
 - Library
 - Realigned staffing for needs of the community: Consolidated two part-time positions for 1 full-time position
 - Parks and Recreation – Realignment for improved process management
 - Created lead positions to aid supervisory chain of command with the divisions (largest department)
 - Align Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map (FLUM), and Zoning Map – Complete
 - Acquire and Deploy Comprehensive Municipal Management Software along with Required Training – Complete
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 - April 2021 – target date to go live with COMPASS system
 - Seek out Funding Sources for Beach Acquisitions
 - Over \$22 million earmarked (started with \$2 million)
 - Implement Code Enforcement Compliance Plan – Complete
- h. Management in Progress (2020 – 2021) (Listed in Priority Order)
- Align Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map (FLUM), and Zoning Map – Complete
 - LDC Update/Impact Fee Study (CD) – In progress
 - Harbor Capacity Study (USACE) (CD)
 - City committee established
 - Project to start April 2021
 - Implement Proactive Code Compliance Program (CC) – Complete
 - Memorialize Institutional Knowledge (All Departments) – In Progress
 - Processes and historical data being incorporated into COMPASS
 - Formed a strike team to prioritize updating and managing operation instructions documents
 - Departments analyzing and revising plans
 - Produce City Facilities and City Infrastructure Plans (PS) – In progress
 - Streetlight, sign, irrigation and other critical infrastructure inventories are being incorporated into our GIS system

- Renewal and Replacement Fund set up for FY 2021 Budget
- Monitor Restore Act Grants (CM) – In progress
 - Grants and Projects Manager is in regular coordination with Restore Act administration

i. Major Projects – FY 2020-2023 (Listed in priority order)

- Development Software Implementation (CD/IT/PS/FIN/CODE)
 - First phase completion – April 2021
- Airport Road Safety Improvements (PS/ENG)
 - Plans are finalized
 - FDOT anticipates Spring 2021 construction
- Construct Capt, Royal Melvin Heritage Park (PR/CD/PS/CM)
 - Construction started
- Renovate Clement Taylor Park (PR/CD/PS/CM)
 - Seawall finished, renovations to start in 2021
- Redevelop Joe’s Bayou Recreation Area (PR/CD/PS/CM)
 - DEP bid process in progress
- Norriego Point Phase III – Recreation Components (PS)
 - DEP obtaining permits
- Calhoun Avenue MUT – Phase I Construction (PS/CD)
 - Construction to start in February 2021
- Calhoun Avenue MUT – Phase II Design & Construction (Pathway under Marler Bridge (PS/CD)
 - CDD & CMO working on funding to complete design
- Beach Street Reconstruction/Resurfacing (PS/ENG)
 - Complete from US Hwy 98 to Kelly Street
- Implement Prioritized Stormwater Improvements Based on the Stormwater Master plan (CD) – In progress
 - Plan came before Council on August 17th
 - Final plan to Council in Spring 2021

j. COVID – 19 Pandemic

- Provided immediate challenges to our workforce and processes
- Forced tremendous amount of change in a very short period of time
- Council and staff have transitioned to new processes so that we can safely conduct business to serve our residents, businesses and visitors
- Staff has accomplished or is accomplishing most planned objectives to-date and have overcome many unplanned challenges associated with COVID-19

k. Senior Leadership Team

- Lance Johnson - City Manager
- Webb Warren - Deputy City Manager
- Lorraine Berish - Senior Administrative Services Coordinator
- Jeff Cozadd - Projects/Grants Contracts Manager
- Catherine Card - Public Information Manager
- Rey Bailey - City Clerk
- Karen Jankowski/Nichole DeVito – Human Resources/Risk Manager
- Krystal Strickland - Finance Director
- Matthew Pace - Information Technology Manager
- Michael Burgess - Public Services Director
- Lisa Firth - Parks and Recreation Director
- Louis Zunguze - Community Development Director
- Joey Forgione - Code Compliance Manager
- Wen Livingston - Library Director

l. Introductions

At this time, all session participants (Mayor, City Council, and staff) introduced themselves.

m. Strategic Partner Presentations

Ms. Jennifer Adams, Executive Director of Tourist Development Council (TDC), discussed some of the TDC initiatives for 2021. She stated that although the TDC was down 18 percent in 2020; October 2020 was up by 68 percent. She stated they cut a lot of their projects at the Convention Center on Okaloosa Island due to COVID-19, losing about \$2 million. But, their reserve funds are mostly intact. They also approved a 5-year \$30 million capital projects plan last year, with Destin having the major share of those dollars, with more than \$19 million with projects to include the purchasing of beach front property to which the TDC is very committed. They saved \$2.5 million in advertising last year, which is then added to the normal \$5 million advertising budget this year. They have invested a lot of money in putting together a strategic research plan. They are focusing on a new initiative called “Destination Stewardship” with the goal of making the experience better for their visitors, residents and people who work in the community. Through research they realize they need to make the experience better for their residents and visitors. Their biggest problems are mobility, accessibility to water, and both residents and visitors think they lack in southern hospitality. Everything they are doing with “Destination Stewardship” will be designed to combat those issues. They also rebranded. They are no longer the Emerald Coast - Northwest Florida – Okaloosa Island. They are now Destin – Fort Walton Beach Florida. That brand is out and starting to gain some momentum changing the mind set of visitors. There have been talk of possibly expanding the taxing district to be County-wide. It hits on product developments, with Destin obviously the biggest brand. The funds they have already earmarked for their projects cannot be sent to the northern end of the County. She would be working with the City and discussing the composition of the TDC Board to make sure there is a sit for Destin and outlining their plans for moving forward.

Councilmember Ramswell asked how the expansion of the taxing district could impact distribution of tax dollars, which is typically based upon population. She stated that Destin brings in the bulk of the bed tax dollars, but it does not have the highest population.

Ms. Adams stated that they look at the whole picture, including the problems, and align it with the branding initiatives. They react to the research, then they allocate funds. This is how they plan to continue, and they would be working on a plan with the City.

Councilmember Braden noted that purchasing beach front property benefits the entire County; and that they hope to continue purchasing more property, possibly a fishing marina.

Ms. Adams noted that the projects they have in the capital improvements plan, such as the bridge-to-bridge bike path and waterfront property, are designed to benefit the entire community. They are all within the taxing district. The 5-year plan is set and approved, and funding will be allocated to it for the next 5 years.

Councilmember Braden asked if there have been some suggestions or if there's anything they ought to be doing now to improve upon the perception that they lack in southern hospitality.

According to Ms. Adams, they have reached out to the college to see if they could do some hospitality training. She stated that the TDC has about 110 partners and they have been working through them to try to do outreach and education. She continued that with the "Destination Stewardship" they would be employing people who would be out coordinating and interacting with people. They plan to be more creative in getting the message out to people and continue to have outreach and education.

Mr. Lockwood Wernet, General Manager of the Destin Water Users (DWU), spoke next. He noted that DWU is the water and sewer provider serving the City of Destin and the unincorporated areas of Okaloosa County north of US Hwy 98 and west of the Mid-Bay Bridge. Their objective is to always provide safe and reliable drinking water to their members. He stated they have had an excellent relationship with the City and staff through the years. He asked that the City continuous to include DWU in the coordinating process in all their projects, especially some of the bigger projects they have discussed today, such as the undergrounding of utilities along US Hwy 98, as there are a lot of utilities in the ground. They also expect to have a lot of involvement with the crosstown connector. He sees a lot of opportunities for DWU to continue to loop their system to provide reliable pressure throughout the rights-of-way. He also stated they have done some expansion of sewer lines in the past and are working very hard to try to eliminate septic tanks. They would like to partner with the City to help them notify and convince the property owners to convert from septic tank to sewer. Also, there is comprehensive legislation that has been passed dealing with water and sewer massive management. As they work through those things, there are a lot of important information they need to share with the City; some of which are still being developed.

The Mayor inquired as to the approximately number of septic tanks there are within the city limits of Destin.

Mr. Wernet replied there are about 200 septic tanks, but so far, they have not been much of an issue locally. It does not impact their drinking water because it comes from Florida aquifer which is separated by clay layer, and there is no transmission between the aquifers. He continued that it is more of an issue for those areas central Florida as their watershed is much closer to the ground. They are establishing best management practices to try to remove septic tanks and cleanup those watersheds. He also stated the main reason

they want to get rid of septic tanks in this community is because it is in the sand and gravel aquifer which interconnects with basin bayous

Councilmember Schmidt inquired as to the main function of the west end water tower and whether it is operational.

Mr. Wernet announced the water tower has been operational since July 2020. He explained that the primary water supply, and 66 percent of their water, comes from the inland wells north of Freeport, that they developed jointly with South Walton. They needed to add some storage in order to get water into the western part of the system. The west end water tower once served as a storage facility to make sure they meet their mandate to limit what they are taking out of their coastal wells and take more from their inland wells. It also provides fire protection for the western side of town.

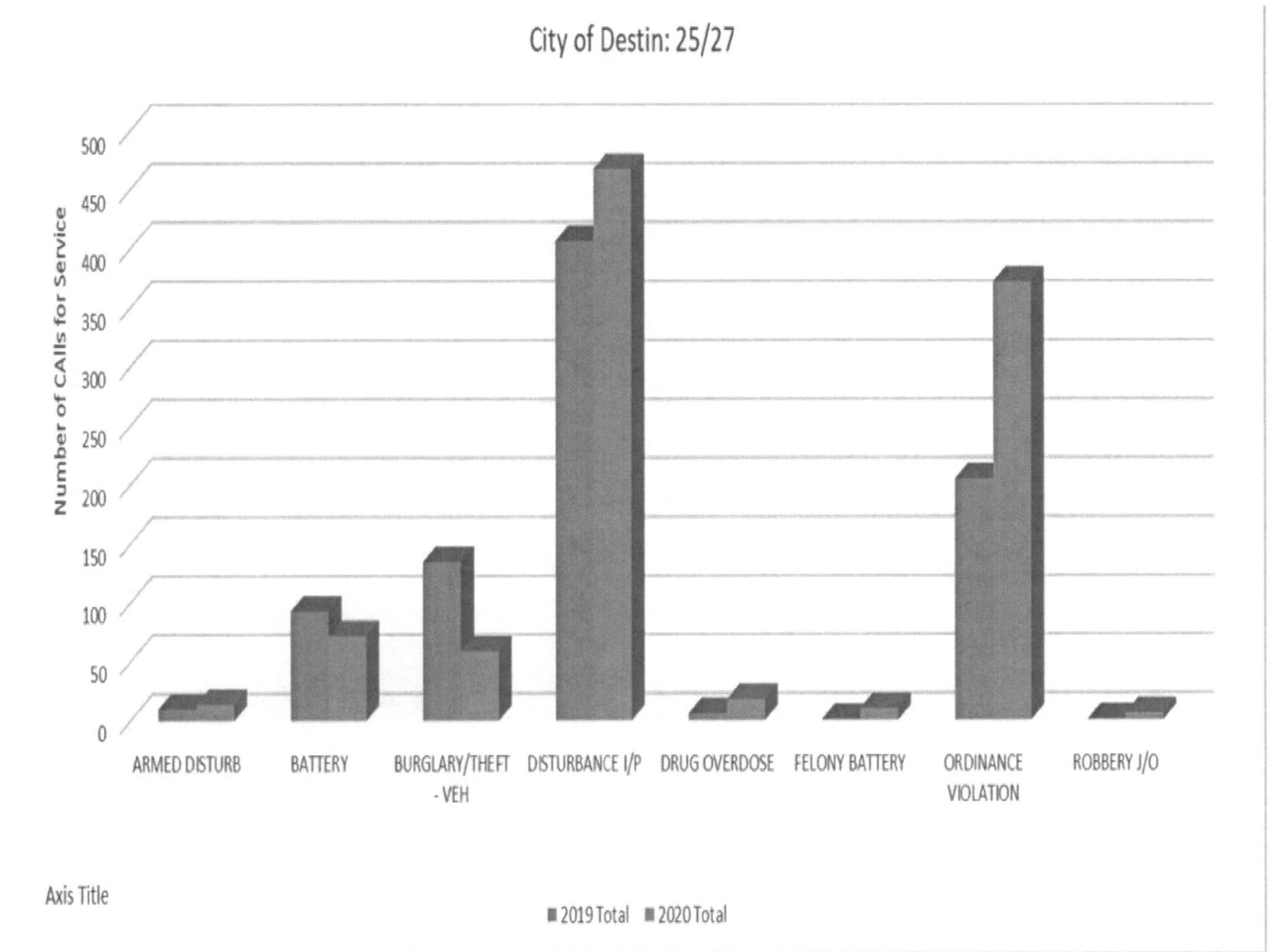
Mr. Shane Moody, President and CEO of the Destin Chamber of Commerce, stated that the Chamber has had an excellent relationship with the City through the years, and that several members of City staff as well as a current member of the Council have been through their leadership program called Destin Forward. He stated the one of the things they have been discussing was the labor pool. People used to drive across the bridge for service jobs here in Destin. But with all the development in Niceville and Crestview, and that is currently happening in Freeport, those jobs have been created on the north side of the bridge. Workers do not have to drive all the way to Destin to go to work. He also stated that the crosstown connector has been a big Chamber initiative and they are glad to hear the City is moving forward with its construction. It has been discussed over the past 18 years. Mr. Moody also noted that traffic in Destin has been a big issue; but traffic does not come into a stand still on US Hwy 98 mainly due to the number of cars on the road. The reason they have so many cars on the road is because there is no place to park in Destin. They may need to consider a public-private partnership in building parking garages to help solve the parking problems. He further stated that the event center would be a tremendous project for the City, and that the Chamber is willing to do everything possible to help the City make it come to fruition. He also stated that the City is doing an excellent job with code enforcement. It has been a big issue with the Chambers and something they have been addressing the past several years. Purchasing beach front property is a tremendous initiative for the City. Lack of beach access has been the biggest complaints they receive from residents and visitors alike. There is also a problem with water access once people get to the beach, which they need to address. They need to figure out how the tourist, who spend a lot of money coming to Destin, can have access to the water. He added that Destin is a town of approximately 14,000 people, but a community of about 100,000 most of the time because of the tourists; adding that it is a small community with big city issues.

Councilmember Braden asked what the Chamber has done to assist in solving the problems with lack of beach access and access to the water.

Mr. Moody stated that it is a very difficult issue because it involves legislative matters concerning private property owners. They have worked closely with the sheriff's department to deal with the vendors and explain to them what they can and cannot do. It has been an issue since the early 2000, and it is something that is not going away any time soon. They need to figure out some way to work with their beach vendor partners who also generate a lot of money and jobs for this community.

The Mayor suggest the Chamber Board reach out to beach vendors that are members of the Chamber and try to come up with some possible solutions and bring them up for the City to explore. It would put the Council in a better position to execute some policy that could provide some solutions to this problem.

Capt. Mike Howell of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office noted that their contract with the City of Destin involves 21 sworn deputies – 17 road deputies, 2 investigators, a front desk deputy and a beach marine deputy. Their 2021 contract went down by 1.2 percent or approximately \$28,000. He discussed the following statistics regarding the primary calls for service received from the City of Destin and responded to by law enforcement officers in 2019 and 2020



n. Public Comments:

Ms. Myra Williams, a Destin resident, commented on improving the looks on US Hwy 98 and the western portion of Destin. She asked Council to limit the ability of homeowners to take down a 50-year old or a 100-year old tree, and to have something in the Land Development Code or Comprehensive Plan that allows for the preservation of the canopy. She stated that trees provide a lot of benefits, and that it takes more than a lifetime to get big trees back in place. She stated that she is a big proponent of undergrounding the utilities. She also mentioned there was a plan to enhance the Welcome to Destin sign at the

foot of the Marler Bridge, but there were some territorial issues with the military. She would like to see some alternative solutions to that issue. Finally, she expressed her gratitude to the Council and other organizations for their support of the Destin High School and in helping it come to fruition; adding they plan to open its doors in August 2021.

Mr. Dave Mcpherson from NashBuilt Inc., discusses the proposed Destin Community Events Center and the benefit of events center in comparison to civic centers in terms of revenue. He stated that they looked at 3 sites when this issue was discussed last year. One was the property located right beside the existing convention center. Another was the current location of the Old Type Pottery. He stated that he cannot reveal the third site at this time. He also stated he is aware that cost is an issue, and so they need to have a collaborative discussion started if they plan pursue this initiative.

Ms. Marcie Bell, a Destin resident, applauded the beach initiative going on in the City. She thanked the TDC for their assistance as well as property owners who have sold their property and those who are coming forward. She also asked the City to remember turtle lighting along the southern corridor of US Hwy 98 as they discuss conversion of streetlights to LED lights; adding it prevents the turtles from coming towards the street. She also asked the City to consider putting solar panels on top of government buildings. She also pointed out that Section 32B of the City's contract with Waste Management states that the City has the right to audit Waste Management's records twice a year. She asked the Council to consider taking that action as 15 of 20 units in her street alone have not been paying for their trash service. She further stated that she agrees with the City's prioritized customer group – year-round residents, Destin businesses, and tourism. However, in order for Destin-based businesses to succeed, their tourists have to be happy. It creates a cumulative effect if the tourists cannot get to their waters.

City Staff Presentations – Top Priorities and Needs in 2021

➤ **City Manager - Lance Johnson**

- Continuously strive to improve transparent communications with Council, residents, businesses, and staff members
- Professionally execute the City Council's adopted Strategic Priorities and Policies
- Provides staff with the resources they need to execute City Council's Strategic Priorities and Policies
- Remove barriers preventing staff from executing City Council's Strategic Priorities and Policies
- Oversee with integrity the stewardship of the City's fiscal and physical resources
- Preserve the organization's knowledge in processes and procedures
- Foster a team-oriented culture of Continuous Quality Improvement

➤ **Deputy City Manager – Webb Warren**

- Adopt best practices and leverage technology to improve administrative processes
 - MUNIS Financial/HR System
 - Agenda Management System
 - COMPASS
 - Rectrac

- Website
 - Passport
 - Continue to improve communication with the City's strategic partners to help implement Council's policy and strategic plan objectives
 - Okaloosa County Administrative Staff
 - Tourist Development Department Administrative Staff
 - OCSO
 - Improve staff, volunteer, and Council orientation process
- **Finance – Krystal Strickland**
- Training Finance staff
 - Updating financial policies
 - Procurement process and training for staff
 - Updating fixed asset management
 - FEMA procedures and training
- **Community Development – Louis Zunguze**
- COMPASS/EnerGov Software
 - Full implementation
 - Streamlining development review processes to improve turnaround times
 - Land Development Code (LDC) Update
 - Complete re-write of the LDC to align with Comprehensive Plan
 - Staffing Issues
 - Additional staffing/outside resources
 - Address compensation packages
 - Need to be competitive in hiring
 - Attract and retain competent staff

DISCUSSIONS:

Councilmember Hebert asked staff to provide some recommendations, sooner rather than later, on actions the Council could undertake to help alleviate the difficulty of hiring competent and highly qualified staff to fill their vacant positions.

The City Manager explained that this problem is beyond the Community Development Department. It is an ongoing problem for the City as a whole. They hire and train employees, and then they leave for a higher salary elsewhere.

Councilmember Ramswell asked about the results of the comprehensive evaluation the City's HR Manager conducted last year of all the positions in the City in terms of salaries in comparison with other cities.

According to HR Manager Karen Jankowski, an internal study was conducted in 2019. Some of the positions were adjusted accordingly based on the study. She also explained that each time there is a job opening, she confers with the Finance Director before the position is advertised. They look at the current needs of the market, determine the budget availability, and whether it is feasible to increase the salary offer to fill the position. They also try to balance the market needs with internal equity and avoid paying the new hire a higher salary than someone who is already in a similar position in the City. She also noted that salary expectations for specialized positions are quite high even from applicants just coming out of college and with no prior experience. She also

mentioned that they hired Evergreen Solutions to conduct a comprehensive wage and class study a few years back. One of their recommendations was to conduct a wage and class study every 3 to 5 years; and so there will be a recommendation to Council for another wage and class study in 2022.

Councilmember Destin noted that the City incorporated 36 years ago; and that the primary purpose for that incorporation was to afford the City the ability to handle growth, and to have some input into the quality of life in Destin. Decisions that affected the City were previously made at the County level with very little input from Destin. He continued that the main goal for the incorporation would be lost without a strong, vibrant, and efficient Community Development; which is why one of his top priorities is to provide City staff the resources they need to do the job necessary to fulfill the goal for the incorporation.

Councilmember Braden noted that the common theme among all the department is staffing needs. They are losing well qualified employees to other organizations that are offering more money. If they do not provide staff the resources necessary to accomplish the tasks this Council and its citizens expect, the goals they establish will not be accomplished.

➤ **Information Technology – Matthew Pace**

- EnerGov/COMPASS Software
 - Completion of implementation
 - Integration with City departments to maintain excellence in service
 - Continue to streamline departmental functions and processes
- Network and Information Technology growth within the organization
 - User mobility and emergency remote capabilities
 - Software upgrades
 - Best-in-suite systems for consolidation of services
 - New and improved equipment to maintain high levels of service
 - Overhaul of wireless phone and data services (Federally Regulated Service Provider Access)
- Network and Data Cybersecurity Measures
 - End-user Training and Awareness
 - Advanced Threat Protection Integration with current systems
- Enhance network and wireless equipment to handle more secure and sustainable communications

DISCUSSIONS:

Councilmember Hebert stated that the City has such a terrible internet and phone services especially during tourist season. She asked if and when they could upgrade their infrastructure.

Mr. Pace explained that in terms of wireless components, there are very little bandwidths left. The United States was slated to run out of bandwidth for their 4G networks in 2020. All towers are being converted to 5G network, which is a totally different system than the 3G and 4G. The latter are not working to capacity because they do not have the availability of connection. When they get an influx of people in Destin, towers get overloaded especially when they have events down on the Harbor. The harbor has Century Link connections, which are extremely slow. Things will be different once the new towers are put in place; however, the City is not on the priority list since it is not an urban center like Atlanta and New York. He continued that the City's infrastructure is older. Nothing has been updated. There are avenues they need to explore to make sure the infrastructure is sound for residents, but it would take some initiatives and planning, and

possibly working with private-public partnerships. He added that some wiring upgrades would hopefully take place during the undergrounding of utilities.

Councilmember Ramswell noted that statutes are written in a way that basically grants a monopoly to cable or internet companies, limiting the companies that could come in and service a particular area causing the level of service to suffer. For instance, Cox Communications is essentially the cable provider for this area. She continued that she favors the whole concept of competition as they get better quality service because companies are fighting to provide that service. She asked how they might be able to change that process or convince legislature it needs to be changed to allow other companies to come in and compete for service.

Mr. Pace explained that proving monopolistic activities would not be easy because, though they are not the greatest, there are other service providers in the area other than Cox Communications. HughesNet is their satellite provider, Century Link is the DSL provider, and Cox Communication is the broadband cable service provider. He also stated that just because they have no other service providers in the cable arena does not necessarily mean Cox Communications has a monopoly in a particular area. The firm could own the infrastructure or portions of the infrastructure where the wires run through; or lease it from Gulf Power or other property owner and not allow other users to access their wiring system.

➤ **Projects/Grants/Contracts – Jeff Cozadd**

- Grants procurement and management
 - Identify/secure grant funding
- Project management
 - Significantly improved with the development of the City's Project Review Team
- City procurement policy
 - Considered making modifications
 - Create simple/efficient process

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Braden asked what grant the City is currently pursuing.

Mr. Cozadd noted that the City has applied for a grant to add \$25,000 worth of exercise equipment to the walking path of Morgan Sports Complex. The other was for a recreational trail enhancement program, a larger grant which they plan to pursue next. They have to secure funding for it because it is a matching grant. There is a variety of other grants they plan to pursue in the near future. He added that they look at their strategic goals that have already been identified and they tried to pursue grants to match those goals. There are a lot of grants available, it is just a matter of finding grants for which they are eligible.

➤ **Code Compliance – Joey Forgione**

- Staffing needs
- Deputy Manager or shift supervisor
 - Good management practices
 - Allows supervisor to handle nighttime issues
 - Allow supervisor to handle weekend issues
 - Filters low level issues
 - Allows Professional Growth Development & Advancement

- Builds moral
- Staffing needs
- Code Compliance needs
 - Reclassification of part-time beach compliance officer to full-time
- Department equipment needs
 - 20-foot harbor compliance vessel
 - Beach Unit 4-Wheeler
 - Radio Communication
 - Officer safety
 - Faster dispatch time
 - Emergency management
 - Waiting for the County to go to New System
- Davis or Elvis System
 - Allows to Run Tags & Vessels – help locate owners of abandoned property

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Braden asked if the City has the money they could allocate for the new vessel or whether they need to rely on grants.

Mr. Forgione stated they would certainly pursue any grants available for it.

Councilmember Ramswell stated that with regards to community policing aspects, they may want to consider incorporating some sort of a neighborhood watch approach or a citizen patrol who watches the field and report their findings to the Code Compliance Department; adding it could help the officers immensely in their information gathering.

Mr. Forgione stated it is definitely something worth considering. He continued that it is already happening in an unofficial capacity, as they are being contacted by rental companies, beach vendors and harbor businesses on a regular basis to report code violations.

➤ **Public Information - Catherine Card**

- Continue to strengthen and engage citizens by creating and administering proactive contention on the City's social media platforms
- Support social media strategy by creating strong digital content for the City
- Create video library for City achievements, high-level projects, Council and staff Q&A

➤ **Human Resources – Karen Jankowski**

- Flat organization
 - Lack of progression, i.e., train to retain, not train to leave
 - Highly competitive market
 - Especially for specialized disciplines
 - High turnover of part-time staff
- Recommend new wage and class study in 2022

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Hebert asked if there is a way to put some sort of a 2-year clause on someone's contract to prevent them from leaving after receiving training from the City.

Ms. Jankowski stated there may be able to do it for specialized positions, but they decide not to do it to avoid any legal ramifications.

➤ **City Clerk – Rey Bailey**

- Make necessary preparations for upgrade to the City’s meeting agenda system (CiviClerk8) platform. New version offers a better user interface and better control of agenda and meeting management
- Acquire cemetery record management software that is user-friendly and offers robust computing, searching and plotting option to most effectively manage cemetery data
 - Currently using excel database to keep track of voluminous records
 - Managing decades of information. Maintaining accurate records is essential
 - Information is not secure by today’s standards. Data can be easily lost and compromised
 - Limitations stand in the way of progress and managing cemeteries much easier

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Braden stated that the cemetery record management software should have been acquired a long ago since they are dealing with sensitive information which they could ill-afford to lose.

➤ **Public Works – Michael Burgess**

- Human resources needs
 - Staffing levels to meet current demands
 - Competitive compensation
 - Need for a career ladder (compensation for qualifications)
- Equipment;/Facility needs
 - Dump truck – current dump truck is over 20 years old
 - Chipper Trailer – current chipper is over 20 years old
 - Metal building for Public Works and Parks and Recreation staff and equipment
 - 6” Self-Priming Trash Pump expansion of existing parking area of maintenance facility
- Emergency management needs
 - City of Destin currently has no hardened facility
 - No alternate means of communication other than cell phones (radios, 800 MHz or equivalent)

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Schmidt asked whether salary is an issue with the maintenance position remaining vacant for quite a while.

According to Ms. Jankowski, they were able to increase the advertised rate for the position. They also had to increase the salary for each individual already occupying a similar position. She continued that if they hire someone with a higher education and more experience than the salary amount being advertised calls for, they could probably go back and see if they could further increase the salary rate working within the framework of the already approved budget.

Councilmember King asked whether seeking a grant or raising the millage rate the only possible solutions to paying their employees more money or upgrading their equipment and facility since they are such a small town with limited budget.

The City Manager noted that grant is not an option when dealing with personnel payroll issues.

Finance Director Krystal Strickland stated that they need recurring revenue to cover their personnel issues. They want to be able to offer livable family wage. She continued there is a 2-mil cap on the millage rate in the City Charter. This is probably due to the City not having its own first responders and police department and fire departments. She noted that a large percentage of the City's annual budget goes to law enforcement through a contract with the County. She also noted that the City's current millage rate is at 1.6 mil, which is by far the lowest in this area – Crestview is at 6.9 mils, Fort Walton Beach at 5.6 mils, Mary Esther and Valparaiso at 5 mils, and Niceville at 3.7 mils. She recommends that Council reconsiders this matter over the coming terms.

Councilmember Destin stated that having reoccurring revenues should help solve some of these issues. However, due to decisions made by previous Councils, some of these reoccurring revenues are spent on other projects. They formed two community redevelopment areas (CRA) that capped the amount of reoccurring revenues as they diverted a large amount of money away from it to build projects for the CRAs – such as, Harborwalk and Mountain Drive Renovation. These are projects that have a life span of several years. They are now about to make a decision on other big projects such as undergrounding the utilities. They are going to take the reoccurring revenues, such as the franchise fee increase, and use them to pay off the bond issue for the project; and as to the number of years would depend upon the bond issue.

➤ **Parks and Recreation – Lisa Firth**

- Align staffing levels with increasing number of facilities and parks
- Artificial turf/new sod and lighting for Morgan's Sports Complex
 - Original sod is 20 years old
 - LED conversion
- New Recreation facility. Gym and fields are at capacity

DISCUSSION:

According to the City Manager, there is a distinct possibility that some or all their athletic fields at the elementary schools may be removed to make room for additional buildings.

Councilmember Destin noted that the plan to extend Destin Elementary School was associated with the half-cent sales tax. When he was a member of the school board, the plan was to expand the school and put in some pre-K facilities on the athletic fields and make it two schools. The plan has not been approved, but it would most likely be approved. Destin Elementary School is the biggest elementary school in the County. It has reached its capacity and need to be expanded. It could probably take 3-5 years to complete the project if they decide to proceed with the plan.

Councilmember Schmidt spoke of the importance of prioritization and finding ways to put money into the Renewal and Replacement funds the City's Finance Department set up.

Councilmember King asked how else they could generate revenue other than through a grant or increasing the millage rate.

According to the City Manager, another funding opportunity available to the City is cost recovery. In certain areas of operation such as parks and recreation, they can generate revenues by charging fees for some, or all, of its programs and services as much as the law allows. They may target total cost recovery or recovering some percentage of the cost for running programs based on a variety of considerations.

Ms. Strickland noted that Parks and Recreation Department charges for services and operating grants and capital grants are expected to bring in about \$895,000 this year. This money would go towards the \$3.1 million for personnel, contract services and operating expenditures mostly for utilities. She also stated that another funding option is public-private partnership; with the City partnering with local businesses in funding certain projects.

Councilmember Braden stated they may also consider increasing business tax receipts as well as library fees, which have not been increased since the 1990s.

➤ **Library – Wen Livingston**

- Staffing
 - High turnover of part-time staff

- Collection development funding
 - Nonfiction materials are very dated and need to be replaced
 - Spanish language collection is very weak and needs to be developed
 - ebook and e-audio book demand is increasing, and these materials are typically double or triple the cost of print materials
 - New demand for streaming video services
 - Building limitations
 - The building is close to 20 years old and was not designed for future needs. The large meeting room is too small for some events. Children's story time room is not soundproofed, and the programs disturb people in the library

o. Council and Mayor – Key Initiatives and Projects – General Comments

➤ Councilmember Ramswell

- Annexation – work on incorporating different parcels in the neighborhood that are located just outside the City's boundary
 - Provides incentives for annexation; for example:
 - Waive certain fees or taxes
 - Allow feather signage for businesses, similar to County
 - Change zoning in certain areas to be consistent with the County (i.e., some parcels on Airport Road e to the belonging to the City are zoned differently than parcels belonging to the County)

- Public access to waterways
 - ut
 - Improve access to waterways making them feasible and viable for people to utilize and enjoy
 - Destin High School
 - Looking at potential partnership with the City (i.e., use of sports field, financial assistance)
 - Wayfinding Program
 - Develop/implement something unifying and unique, i.e.,
 - “You are in Destin”
 - “This is the Fishing Village”
 - Previously provided examples of signage from Gulf Port, Mississippi the City could consider implementing along its corridor
 - Focus on a PR campaign on reasons for increasing the millage rate – try to get the public to understand
 - Being able to retain employees instead of the City being a training ground
 - Being able to pay for beautiful amenities the citizens want
 - The City has one of the lowest millage rate in the State
- Councilmember Braden
 - Completion of EnerGov/COMPASS project
 - Completion of Capt. Royal Melvin Heritage Park
 - Provide more staffing needs/hire more staff/increase wages
 - Update golf cart/SLV rules
 - Compliance with Short-Term Rental regulations (an ongoing matter)
 - Get the directors inputs in determining appropriate wages for their people
 - Councilmember Destin
 - If they want to address personnel and equipment issues it must come from a reoccurring revenue source. Funding needs to be available every year. IT cannot be treated as a capital project
 - Every year they need to determine which projects to set aside so they could use the money for personnel salaries and other needs
 - Wage and Class Study is necessary. They need to seek independent / objective advice
 - Should not leave it to supervisors and City Manager to determine who gets a raise and how much, and then have Council approves
 - Councilmember Overdier
 - Need to focus more on beach acquisition/need to purchase more properties
 - Need to develop the properties they purchase
 - Focus on annexation
 - Wage and Class Study is important, but a brand-new study is not necessary at this time
 - A study was conducted just two years ago. Finance Director and HR Manager can probably collaborate and update the information using cost of leaving increase the past two years
 - They have one of the lowest millage rate in the State. The citizens want more but are not willing to pay for it

- Councilmember Hebert
 - Beach acquisition should continue to be a priority
 - Underground utilities should be one of their top priorities
 - Create a convention center/sports center in the Town Center CRA where the Old Tyme Pottery was located
 - Annexation
 - Create incentives to make people want to be part of the City
 - Competitive wages
 - Stop wasting money on wage and class study. Use money to pay staff instead
 - Lock employees into a contract (i.e., 2 years) so they do not leave after receiving training

- Councilmember King
 - Purchase the Old Tyme Pottery location and convert it to a sports facility
 - City marina

- Councilmember Schmidt
 - Comparative wages for City staff
 - Another wage and class study is unnecessary at this time
 - Low wages is the known problem
 - There is an immediate need to hire more people
 - Obtaining more public beach accesses is a must
 - Make sure residents, not just visitors, are provided primary access to public beach
 - Transit trolley to provide transportation to public beach
 - Request TDC funding for all City services
 - Destin has a 14,000-citizen community, but it is supporting a huge population of people (approx. 100,000) that benefits the entire County. The TDC should assist in funding for:
 - OCSO services contract with the City. The OCSO responds to call from visitors, particularly from people on the beach
 - Undergrounding of utility
 - Morgan Sports Complex sports activities. They bring in visitors from other states with seasonal sports
 - Convention Center/Sports Complex
 - Old Tyme Pottery's previous location is a perfect place for it
 - Look into Public-Private partnership to purchase or lease the property

- Mayor Jarvis
 - Multi-use events center
 - Part of the whole concept of the original CRA master plan established in 1998 and updated in 2014 was bringing people to the City, allowing for movement, and providing for economic opportunity
 - Multi-use events center fits the vision of prior Council
 - Benefits the CRA
 - Can spur redevelopment interest in the CRA
 - Can be the gateway into the CRA

- Generate tremendous amount of economic income from sports tourism
- Can enhance the probability of keeping the City's ad-valorem tax low
- Can function as emergency shelter for people during a storm event

p. Public Comments

Mr. Mike Buckingham, a Destin resident and Chairman of the Harbor CRA Advisory Committee, noted that the committee has felt very strongly about cleaning up the harbor and bringing it back to the way it used to be. They fully support the fishing industry and they want to recommend to the City to do whatever is necessary to obtain a City marina. He also supports a wage increase for City staff and encourages the Council to reach out to other cities for information rather than paying a company to conduct another study.

Mr. Lockwood Wernet, Chairman of the Town Center CRA Advisory Committee, noted that the Town Center CRA is currently operating in the red because of a previous downturn of the economy. Part of their master plan is to create a redevelopment parcel that could really spark redevelopment in the Downtown Destin Shopping Center. He urged the City to take advantage of the opportunity to develop the available property, possibly through a public-private partnership.

Mr. Shane Moody stated that the event center would be quite an attraction, and that the Chamber has always been in favor of it. It is not only for sports, but it could also be used to hold concerts. They will have the opportunity to invite famous artist to perform and generate a lot of money for the City. He also stated that a parking garage in the harbor is the only piece of public infrastructure that pays for itself and can lead to better development.

Ms. Sandy Trammell stated that public transportation is a major issue. They desperately need it now to be able to expand it if necessary, to support the other goals they set. She also noted that the reason the convention center on Okaloosa Island failed was they discontinued all the local festivals. They made the criteria and the rent so high that no one could afford it. She also stated that if they have an events center, they could open it up to local festivals in between sports activities. She also recommends charging volunteer committees to come up with some recommendations on how to generate funding for the City.

Ms. Marcie Bell reported having single-family residential homes in the City that are claiming homestead exemptions even though the owners do not live in Destin. Four of these properties are located on Holiday Isle. She stated that she has already addressed this issue with the County, but nothing has been done. In the meantime, the City of Destin is losing tax dollars. She urged the Council to take some action.

Ms. Kimberly Perry, a Destin resident and business owner, stated that the roadway would first have to be addressed as the City plans to build all the large facilities such as an events center. They need to solve the parking problem that currently exist. They need parking garages throughout the City, especially in the harbor area.

q. Prioritization of Initiative and Projects

Mr. Eddy noted that all the objectives that the Mayor and Council have identified have been listed on the board. Each elected official has been provided 7 “dots” (one dot equals one vote). He asked the Council to select their priority objectives for implementation by placing one or more dots for each objective they wish to support.

The results of the voting are as follows:

NOTE: * Included in FY 2020 Council Objectives

** Initiative/Project in Progress

RANKING	INITIATIVE/PROJECT	VOTES
1	** EnerGov / COMPASS (complete the project)	7
2	Staffing Needs (i.e., wages, hire more staff, etc.)	6
3	City Marina	5
3	* Convention Center/Multi Use/City Center (research viability)	5
5	Public Beach Initiative	4
6	Annexation	3
6	** Crosstown Connector (complete the project, two-lane roadway)	3
6	Livery Vessel Regulation/Permitting	3
6	Parking Lot Drop Off Space (fish cleaning, bathrooms, inshore guides)	3
6	Transit Trolley (i.e., access to public beach, along US Hwy 98)	3
11	Building Permits (routine/quicker close out, do not add unless code provides for)	2
11	* Improve Parking (i.e., explore options, garage/surface parking)	2
11	* Underground Utilities	2
14	Beach Renourishment	1
14	High School (assist private efforts)	1
14	Holiday Decorations (pre-plan/install electrical)	1
14	* Implement a roadway striping program	1
14	Improve West End of US Hwy 98 (i.e., Harbor CRA)	1
14	* Request TDC Funds for all Services	1
14	Revenue Sources (explore/expand)	1
14	Wayfinding Program (develop/implement)	1

Other Initiatives and Projects (received no votes)

- Beach Cleanup (per contract/take over service)
- * Board & Committees Training for Members
- Bring New Ideas (City Manager/Staff to Council)
- ** Calhoun Avenue Multi-Use Trail Phase II (under Marler Bridge) Design/Construct

- ** Capt. Royal Melvin Heritage Park & Plaza (complete the project)
- Continuity of Streetlights (convert to LED)
- Contracts (improve writing/follow up)
- Core Services (make effective/efficient)
- Destin Government Operations (brief new council members, FLC orientation for new council members)
- * Enforce Residential Boat & RV Parking Regulations
- * Golf Cart/LSV Rules & Update
- Implement enhanced signage control
- Improve City/County Relationship
- Improve Communications with Council/Public/Staff/CM-Council
- * Improve Sidewalks (wider/more walkable)
- * Improvement of City's Gateways
- Public Access to Waterways
- Redevelopment (partnerships, attention to run down areas)
- Reestablish Environmental Committee
- Renewal and Replacement Program (funds reoccurring)
- * Short Term Rental Compliance with Regulations
- US Hwy 98 – Improve Sections Not Updated (add trees/signage)
- US Hwy 98 Improvements (landscaping/utility to reduce interruption)
- Welcome Sign (move to east side, provide photo opportunity)


3. Closing Comments

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.



Gary Jarvis, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rey Bailey, City Clerk