

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

TENTATIVE BUDGET HEARING September 9, 2009

Mayor Penton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

At this time Mayor Penton announced that any comments on Ordinance 1254 and/or Ordinance 1255 will be allowed by Polk City Taxpaying Residents only. To make comments or ask questions, you need to come to the front of the room, wait to be recognized, and then speak into the microphone giving your name and address.

Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Mayor Penton.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Donald Penton, Vice Mayor Nancy Adorno, Councilor Kristi Eilertsen, Councilor Joe LaCascia, Councilor Paula Roddenberry, City Manager Cory Carrier, City Attorney Jeff Sullivan-absent, and City Clerk Patricia Jackson. Also present were Assistant City Manager Pam Peterson, City Planner Gene Kniffin, Finance Administrator Pam Lawson, and Code Enforcement Officer Kathy Delp.

A quorum was established, and Mayor Penton turned the meeting over to City Manager Carrier.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

City Manager Carrier announced that pursuant to Florida Statute Ordinances must be read in full

ORDINANCE 1254, AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF POLK CITY OF POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE FINAL LEVYING OF AD VALOREM TAXES FOR THE CITY OF POLK CITY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010 AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

City Manager Carrier read Ordinance 1254 in its entirety. The millage rate is 7.6991, which is equal to the rolled back rate.

At this time Mayor Penton opened the Public Hearing. Mr. Mike Blethen, 320 Crape Myrtle Lane, addressed the Council and started to question the budget. City Manager Carrier advised this Ordinance is on the millage rate, not the budget; she explained the millage comes first, then the budget. Mr. Blethen asked why the City did not set the millage at the old rate; City Manager Carrier advised the City is using the roll-back rate; however, the roll-back rate is not raising the taxes. City Manager Carrier explained

under the “Actual” Column, that number represents what has been collected to date from the County; the “2010 Proposed” Column is what is expected to be collected. Other discussion took place regarding the millage rate; Councilor LaCascia advised if the City used the same rate as last year based on the taxable values, there would be no money to meet the expenses. Councilor Eilertsen explained that we budget for the future based on past history. City Manager Carrier advised that 23% was cut from the General Fund, which included \$56,000 from salaries (10%).

Mayor Penton closed the Public Hearing. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Adorn to accept Ordinance 1254; the motion was seconded by Councilor Eilertsen.

Roll Call: Mayor Penton-aye, Councilor Eilertsen-aye, Vice Mayor Adorno-aye, Councilor Roddenberry-aye, Councilor LaCascia-aye.

5-eyes
0-nays

ORDINANCE 1255, AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF POLK CITY OF POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE FINAL BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Manager Carrier read Ordinance 1255 in its entirety; the total budget for Fiscal Year 2009-2010 is \$3,604,276.

Mayor Penton opened the Public Hearing. Mr. Al Schneider, 775 Teaberry Trail, approached the podium and asked several questions pertaining to the budget. He was concerned over the statement made between the two graphs on page 9 of the Budget pertaining to revenues not going up, but water and sewer rates are going up. City Manager Carrier advised the paragraph he is referring to pertains to General Fund; Water and Sewer needs to be self-sustaining. City Manager Carrier then advised there was no increase in the amount of taxes we receive; there is a 23% decrease in expenditures. City Manager Carrier then went over the General Fund; she also advised that there is an increase in water and sewer rates – the City took on two additional companies and did not have a full year of data; on the Mt. Olive System the City had to guess because there was no history. The City forecasted below what the actual cost was. Back to the paragraph Mr. Schneider was referring to, the City Manager advised that was millage and the General Fund Budget and not the water and sewer budget; she will make that more clear in the future.

Mr. Mike Blethen approached the podium and had several questions pertaining to the budget. He asked about the expenditure on page 120 in the amount of \$23,010,000; City Manager advised that was the department requests, not the budgeted amount. He asked about life and health insurance; City Manager advised it did not go up as much as anticipated; the City looks for different avenues every year. She also pointed out the employee salaries were severely cut \$56,000; raises has not been given in almost four years. Some discussion took place regarding sewer and water; City Manager Carrier advised those funds are self-funding. In General Fund there are a variety of sources: Ad Valorem Taxes, franchise fees, State-shared revenue, etc.; whereby water and sewer is based strictly on rates. Other questions were asked and answered regarding the budget and how the budget is done. In conclusion, Mr. Blethen advised the budget

looks good. City Manager Carrier advised the City has been cutting down; a written cost reduction plan has been submitted to the State, and the Auditors are making cuts. She also advised every expenditure is being scrutinized, and anything spent beyond \$500 is signed off by Department Head, Finance and the City Manager. Discussion took place about the Library; how it is changing and the City will be receiving \$25,000 from the Library Cooperative this year since it is open 40 hours a week. City Manager Carrier advised the public will start seeing best sellers back; the Library is also culling books.

City Manager Carrier discussed housing; the City has over 500 empty lots; Councilor LaCascia advised that MOSN has ten (10) starts on housing units. Discussion took place about the budget, the changes, State Mandates, spending trends, etc.

Mr. Blethen advised if the values go back up, his taxes would go back up; City Manager Carrier advised not necessarily. Discussion then took place regarding the City's duty to provide services, and the level of services the City does provide, which includes the Van Fleet Trail. City Manager advised staff has been very active in getting grants to do various projects so that the citizens don't have to pay (Trail, Pocket Park, and Skate Park).

Mayor Penton closed the Public Hearing. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Adorno to accept Ordinance 1255; the motion was seconded by Councilor Eilertsen.

Roll Call: Vice Mayor Adorno-aye, Councilor LaCascia-aye, Mayor Penton-aye, Councilor Roddenberry-aye, Councilor Eilertsen-aye.

5-eyes
0-nays

At this time Mayor Penton said he appreciated everyone that came in. If we could all get together, there are people out there in the outlying areas that need to annex into the City. He mentioned a recent newspaper article concerning a gentleman; if he was in the City he would save money. Also, taxes could have gone down this year if developers had not been so greedy and moved to other cities. We don't need to fight so much.

Councilor Eilertsen thanked everyone for coming and the questions that were asked.

Councilor LaCascia thanked everyone for coming out, but in particular Michael Blethen; he made and sent copies of the budget to over 35 people, and they were asked to scrutinize the budget because he could not find very much to move it from where it was. Mike was the only one who showed up and sat down to get informed answers to his questions. What he hears out here with all of the empty seats is loud applause; he stated that what he meant by that was when people who want to complain about issues when there aren't any, and when someone like Cory and Council has done such a good job and they have nothing to complain about and don't show up, to him it is a lot of applause. He wishes the folks who take time to complain so much would take the time to come and say thanks when things go good. He understands the pain the employees are going through; Mike has taken a cut in pay as well, and other people have come to the meetings whereby they have been cut. He wishes people would come in and say thank you for keeping taxes where they are, because it would have been real easy to raise them.

City Manager Carrier extended an invitation to Mike Blethen to come and meet with her; she will show him all of the documents and he can see for himself the frustration the City goes through in dealing with the State and mandates – the City is not hiding anything. Mayor Penton advised he hasn't and never will. Our meetings are advertised, recorded and in the sunshine; we have to do that by law.

Vice Mayor Adorno commented it is not an easy task to keep a budget at home, let alone the City Budget. Cory gets a wish list from every department; she has to look at it to see what is needed and what the City can do. The budget is not an easy document to read and not easy to go back and forth; a lot of questions were asked.

Mike Blethen brought up the workshop that was held and no public participation. Discussion took place with Council about the budget workshop; the workshop is for Council to review and ask questions and become more knowledgeable; the public is invited to come and listen. Councilor Eilertsen advised she appreciates what is being said. Councilor Adorno advised maybe next year a couple of copies of the budget could be made available at the workshop so that people can follow and see what is being discussed. Further discussion took place about the budget workshop, the availability of the budget from the website, and general review.

Councilor LaCascia made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Councilor Eilertsen and unanimously carried (8:45 pm).

Patricia R. Jackson, City Clerk

Donald L. Penton, Mayor

