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City of Lake Park  
Regular Council Meeting Minutes  
April 01, 2025  
6:00 pm

**Members present** were Mayor Jena Sandlin, Council Member Michelle Lane, Council Member Busby Courson, Council Member Oscar Griffith and Council Member Carl Spano

**Staff Present:** City Clerk Lisa Johnson, Police Chief Ed Yarbrough, Maintenance Supervisor Billy Jones, Maintenance Technician Eli Johnson, Deputy Clerk Christian Crews, Court Clerk Melissa Morey

Mayor Jena Sandlin called the meeting to order.

Mayor Jena Sandlin led the invocation.

Mayor Jena Sandlin led the pledge.

**Minutes:** Mayor Sandlin called for the review and approval of the Minutes. Council Member Michelle Lane made a motion to approve the Minutes of the March 4, 2025 Regular Meeting. Council Member Carl Spano seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Sandlin called for Citizens who have concerns they would like to bring to the Council's attention. She reminded residents that the time was limited to three minutes and asked them to state their name, address and concern at the podium.

**CITIZENS' CONCERNS:**

- Arthur Keckley – 315 4-H Club Rd – Stated he had spoken with the Fire Chief and recommended some grants he had found that are available – the Fire Savers Grant and the Assistance for Firefighters Grant. Reported that on the new road at 4-H Club coming out of Pointer's Ridge the manhole covers are off and lying beside the road at the curb and gutter, noting that this is a safety hazard the Council needs to be aware of.
- Julie Wilbers – 360 Back Forty Dr – Reported that the large stone for the Veterans' Memorial is scheduled to be delivered by the end of the month, and that the committee would like to plan a Dedication ceremony for May 17, Armed Forces Day, at 10 am. This would avoid conflicts for attending dignitaries who are normally attending larger Memorial Day Services; the Memorial Day Service would be scheduled for May 26 at 9:00 am, as normal.
- Susan Keckley – 315 4-H Club Rd – Stated that the City had sent someone to dig out culverts on 4-H Club Rd – she has spoken with the City's Engineer and what had been planned and started, which was holes dug at the culverts, was wrong, and that the holes have subsequently been filled in. She stated that it was obvious that there was a lack of communication within the City regarding this issue, and felt that there

was time and money spent unnecessarily. She stated that the residents just want to be kept up on what's happening, and understand that it takes time. Mrs. Keckley asked Council Member Griffith why he wasn't over the project any more, as she had understood initially that he would be looking into it. Council Member Griffith responded that he had been tasked with the job and another Council Member felt he should be checked behind and Mr. Griffith had asked the Mayor to reassign.

- Gloria Luke – 201 4-H Club Rd – Expressed appreciation for new Maintenance employee Simon Davis cleaning up the corner of 4-H and Marion Ave. She expressed concern for what may be built there and asked if there was an ordinance regarding noise and appropriate times. Police Chief Ed Yarbrough answered that the time in the Ordinance is 11:00 pm, and the noise level is based on decibels.
- Justin Sandlin – came forward to give a report on the Fourth of July celebrating, saying everything is moving forward smoothly. He presented an itemized budget to complete the beautification project. Council Member Michelle Lane asked where the plants would go, and Mr. Sandlin replied that they would be placed in the median, like the palm trees. Mayor Sandlin asked if DOT would pass, and Mr. Sandlin stated that he had contacted Ms. Davis, who is the lead architect for DOT and who approved the original permit, and discussed the additional plans and she has approved, and has given them the guidelines.

#### **REPORTS OF OFFICERS/DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

**Fire Department:** Fire Chief Matt Ryan was not present

- Council Member Spano commented on expenditures that he would like more information on:
  - ♦ Fuel reimbursement due to the truck running out of gas while on a call, which he understands is due to a broken gas gauge;
  - ♦ Repairs on Tanker One required a service call costing \$550 for an on-site repair, and he questioned the regular maintenance of the vehicle. He stated he would follow-up with Chief Ryan. Bob Wilbers stated that the gas gauge on the tanker had recently stopped working, but the gas gauge on Engine 1 does not work, and that efforts had been made to repair it, but no one could be found who could fix it. Mr. Spano restated for clarification that the gas gauges on both Tanker 1 and Engine 1 were not working, and the one on Engine 1 is irreparable, and that he would contact Chief Ryan regarding the repair on Tanker 1.

**Police Department:** Chief Ed Yarbrough

- Presented activity report.
  - Reported that the CPR class for City Staff would take place on April 3 at 7:00 pm at the Civic Center
  - Recognized Corporal Matt Colson for his receipt of Officer of the Year by the Exchange Club. He stated that this is not only because of his patrol work, but in 2025 he has deployed his AED 5 times, has had numerous occasions when he was the first on scene, arriving before the ambulance and has rendered first aid to multiple people. He also enjoys talking to members of the community and being engaged. Chief Yarbrough stated that Corporal Colson does an outstanding job for Lake Park, and he wished he had more like him, because he works and he enjoys his job. Corporal Colson was awarded the 2024 Officer of the Year award by the Exchange Club on March 17, 2025. Chief Yarbrough recognized Officer Colson as an asset to the City.
  - Stated that Court still needs a payment window.
  - Reported that Melissa Morey is now a certified TAC. This is one of the more difficult things to handle in Law Enforcement, and he commended her for her efforts in the accomplishment.
  - Discussed an amendment to processing Open Records Requests for the Police Department, as there are some records that only he has access to and others that only Mrs. Morey has access to. Traditionally, the City Clerk has handled these, but the volume has increased and these requests are coming in almost daily. Chief Yarbrough, the City Clerk and Ms. Morey have discussed this and would

like to request approval that all Open Records Requests for Law Enforcement be assigned to come directly through the Police Chief and TAC; this will make the process much quicker and more efficient. Council Member Oscar Griffith made a motion to approve the Police Chief and TAC to handle Open Records Requests for the Police Department. Council Member Carl Spano seconded the motion, amended to say Requests for Police or Court Records. Council approved unanimously, 4-0.

**Maintenance/Public Works Department:** Eli Johnson, Billy Jones

- Began with discussion regarding the Trejo contractors; he has no complaints with the work they do, and they get a tremendous amount of work done, but the department needs a better solution than Google Translate for translation for the contracted laborers, as none of them speak English and none of the staff speaks Spanish, asking that the company could be requested to send at least one laborer with better English skills.
- Eli Johnson presented the activity report.
- Reported that more grinding was needed on the stump on Broadway
- Requested that service calls for Work Orders that come to the staff in the field also be called into the office by the requester, to ensure that nothing gets overlooked and the documentation remains consistent. Council Member Oscar Griffith stated that all Work Orders need to go through City Hall, as that was the policy recently voted on and approved. Council Member Spano agreed that all Work Orders need to go through City Hall. He asked if the battery for the Dump Truck had a quote, referenced from the Work Order list, and Mr. Johnson responded that this had been purchased and is on the truck.
- Requested a desktop computer for Maintenance, as the tablet does not have the software capability to complete some of the Public Works tasks needed, particularly with mapping the system and hydrants. Mr. Johnson was asked if he had a quote for the computer needed, and the City Clerk stated that Maranello had been contacted for a quote, but it had not yet been received; the most recent purchase, which was for Court, was about \$2,000, and she noted that Court also needed an additional computer for the TAC, which would be limited to GCIC for security purposes.

**Court:** Court Clerk Melissa Morey

- Reported that her TAC certification is complete, and acknowledged that it has been a job, but she is proud to be finished.
- Reported that she had noticed since the GCIC connection is complete, it is dragging down her other systems, and she would need to have GCIC on its own terminal. City Clerk Lisa Johnson stated that there is money in SPLOST: Administration to cover the purchase. Council Member Oscar Griffith made a motion to purchase a new monitor for Court, to be paid for from SPLOST funds. Council Member Spano clarified that he thought the need was for an entire computer unit, and Mrs. Morey confirmed. Council Member Griffith retracted his motion and restated a motion to approve the purchase of a whole computer system for Court, for GCIC only, to be paid for from SPLOST 8: Administration funds. Council Member Spano asked if the motion needed to include the requested Maintenance computer, or if that needed to be done later. The City Clerk explained that some of the things Mr. Johnson had been trying to work on, such as mapping the water system, were easier done on a desktop computer than on the tablet connected to a monitor, noting that she could not explain as well as Mr. Johnson, who had already left. Council Member Carl Spano seconded the motion to purchase a Court computer out of SPLOST 8: Administration funds. The motion passed unanimously.
- Council Member Spano made a motion to purchase a new computer for Maintenance to be paid for out of Maintenance SPLOST funds. Council Member Oscar Griffith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

**Administration:** City Clerk Lisa Johnson

- Presented the Administration report.
- Reported that staff has put out new Requests for Bids for the repairs needed to buildings following Helene, stating that staff is having trouble getting bids for the repairs needed to buildings following Helene, as contractors are backed up.
- Reported that the Auditors were in-house the week of March 17 and have begun the FY24 Audit.
- Discussed upcoming SPLOST IX planning and presented a proposal for Council Members to work with Department Heads to assess the needs of the departments and discuss the costs. The proposal will also begin preparations for the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update. She stated that she feels these two are best tackled hand-in-hand, and that this was up for discussion later on the Agenda. Mayor Sandlin asked her to explain the details as part of this report. Mrs. Johnson explained that SPLOST is up for referendum in November. SPLOST is local option sales tax that must be approved by the voters, and is strictly for Capital Expenditures. The City's Capital threshold is \$2,000. SPLOST provides funds for those items or projects totalling more than the threshold, with more than a one-year life expectancy. These funds are typically used for higher cost items to alleviate the burden on operating budgets, such as equipment, vehicles, and technology. The kickoff meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 24 at the Lowndes County offices. She has included some of the items from the Comprehensive Plan update; this update summarizes the plans of the City for the next five years, and some of the issues that have arisen lately would be included, such as addressing drainage issues, water pressure improvements, some of which can be funded through SPLOST, or which SPLOST can provide grant match. For this reason, she is suggesting that they be looked at simultaneously, as it provides the unique opportunity to identify long-term projects and define funding sources at the same time. This also provides the City with the opportunity to make significant strides in becoming more proactive in addressing the needs of the City as opposed to reacting as unidentified needs come up needing resolution, referencing difficulties resulting from two hurricanes, staff turnover, vehicles breaking down completely and drainage issues that were unanticipated. She acknowledged Chief Yarbrough for being a little more ahead of the game than most, as they have already been discussing a rotation for replacing vehicles and updating technology and equipment. She stated that this would be an intense few months, but it would be beneficial. The deadline for submitting final numbers to the County is June 24.

#### **Financial Reports- City Clerk Lisa Johnson**

- Reported that in printing the reports for the Audit, some questions about beginning balances were introduced by the accountants. The answers linked back to the Closing Tools in the new software. Mrs. Johnson reported that she and Council Member Spano, as the Budget Officer, had spoken about these issues, and they have spoken with the accountants and software representatives, and as Financial Reports needed more work to be accurate, she was requesting that approval be delayed until next month. She stated that because of the way ClerkBooks handles closing the books each month, she was also requesting that she be allowed to present Financial Reports a month later, to ensure accuracy. The ClerkBooks Closing Tools cannot be run until after the bank statements have been reconciled each month; using April as an example, the meeting is on the first day of the month, but statements have not yet dropped. She and Mr. Spano had discussed the best way to ensure that the Council gets the most accurate reports possible. Mr. Spano explained that this is much like most businesses, which close around the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, but since Council meets the first of the month rather than the end of the month, this would allow time for more thorough review internally and the reports could be sent when the closing is completed, giving Council more time for their own review.

#### **Old Business**

- Nuisance Complaint – Mayor Sandlin reviewed the steps that had been taken regarding the Harris Trail nuisance complaint and reported that in spite of having been given additional time in consideration of the hurricane, the problem is still not resolved, and that if there were no further discussions or objections, a citation/summons to Court would be issued to the residents to answer in Court and the City would allow the judge to address the issue. City Attorney Rob Plumb noted that the City had, at one time, appointed the Police Chief as City Marshall, with Code Enforcement responsibilities.
- Council Member Busby Courson presented cost estimates for demolition of the blue building and a quote for the replacement building of \$14,725, stating that wiring would be approximately \$5,000, noting that he would like to have City staff tear the blue building down and maybe offer a bonus upon completion. He has only received one quote of \$20,000 for demolishing the building, but the City could rent a large excavator for \$1,100 per day, the rollofts would be \$490 per haul, \$20 per day, and \$55 per ton. The “game plan” would be to remove the windows, carpet and shingles, things that couldn’t be burned, to be removed by the rollofts and haul the remainder off and burn it. He noted that storage units would need to be rented, and he would suggest renting a U-haul trailer to move items from the building rather than try to move them in the pickups when things might blow off. We do not have quotes on those things yet. Finishing estimates for walls and constructing an office are about \$1,000. Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to proceed with the metal building proposal as presented. Council Member Michelle Lane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0. Resident Susan Keckley stated from the floor that she agreed the maintenance staff should get a bonus if they took the building down. Council Member Lane stated that she felt that was an item to discuss in Executive Session. Council Member Oscar Griffith called for point of order, stating that all discussion should be from the dais when a motion and second are on the floor.

### **New Business**

- Mayor Sandlin brought Council’s attention to the Comprehensive Plan documents in the packet, and explained that these were the projects from the last Comprehensive Plan update. Mrs. Gloria Luke asked from the floor if this was an update for the 5-year plan, and Mrs. Johnson answered yes. Mayor Sandlin noted that there were goals in the plan that the current Council had no details on, and read some of those out: addition of 6-10 miles of new sidewalk, renovation of 10 historical buildings. She then read some of the other goals, including bike trails, streetscaping and the construction of a pavilion at Tom’s Pond. City Clerk Lisa Johnson reported that the Regional Commission was scheduled to meet with the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem regarding the current goals and asked if Council had thoughts to share prior to that meeting. Council Member Spano noted that he felt that a number of the projects listed could be removed. Mrs. Luke asked if they could be removed. Mrs. Johnson responded that they could, and new projects could go on. Council Member Carl Spano suggested a committee of 3-5 citizens of the City to meet with a member of Council weekly to identify needs from a public point of view.
- Discussion of Retreat Action Items was tabled.

Mayor Sandlin called for a motion to enter Executive Session for Minutes Review and to discuss Personnel. Council Member Michelle Lane made a motion to enter Executive Session for Minutes Review and to discuss Personnel. Council Member Carl Spano seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Council entered into Executive Session at 7:31 pm.

Council reentered Regular Session at 8:14 pm. Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to approve the Police Chief to hire, fire, promote or discipline within his department at his discretion, with the exception that pay rate changes must be approved by the City Clerk and Budget Officer prior to action. Council Member Oscar Griffith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Council Member Michelle Lane made a motion to proceed with the Beautification Project with the proposal as presented by Justin Sandlin. Council Member Spano stated that he felt he would have to vote no, as it would go over budget and is not an emergency. Council Member Lane withdrew her motion and stated that she would speak with the committee about getting the cost into the allocated budget.

Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to approve Vicki Jack's position for full-time. Council Member Oscar Griffith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

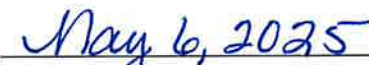
Council Member Griffith noted that point of order in meetings is necessary. When a motion is on the floor, members from the audience shouldn't speak. Council Member Spano agreed, stating that once the floor is closed to the public, it should be closed. Council Member Lane asked if it is the City's responsibility to check manholes on a construction project. City Attorney Rob Plumb responded that the project site is considered private property.

Council Member Griffith stated that he had one other point to address, that being that Council Members should not talk to employees about other employees and then issue instructions to not say anything about it.

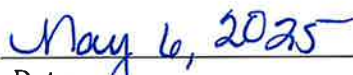
Council Member Michelle Lane made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Busby Courson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The next regular meeting will be on May 6, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

  
Jena Sandlin, Mayor

  
Lisa Johnson, City Clerk

  
Date

  
Date

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