

# Town of Melbourne Beach

## TOWN COMMISSION WORKSHOP

August 22, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

COMMUNITY CENTER – 509 OCEAN AVENUE

### MINUTES

#### Commission Members:

Mayor Alison Dennington

Vice Mayor Sherri Quarrie

Commissioner Corey Runte

Commissioner Marivi Walker

Commissioner Adam Meyer

#### Staff Members:

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro

Town Attorney Ryan Knight

Town Clerk Amber Brown

#### 1. Call to Order

Mayor Alison Dennington called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

#### 2. Roll Call

Town Clerk Amber Brown conducted roll call

#### Commission Members Present

Mayor Alison Dennington

Vice Mayor Sherri Quarrie

Commissioner Marivi Walker

#### Staff Members Present

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro

Town Clerk Amber Brown

#### Commission Members Absent

Commissioner Corey Runte

Commissioner Adam Meyer

### **3. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence**

Mayor Alison Dennington led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **4. Public Comments**

After being acknowledged by the Mayor, members of the public should state their name and address for the record. The Commission encourages citizens to prepare their comments in advance. Each individual will have three (3) minutes to address the Commission on any topic(s) related to Town business, not on the Agenda.

### **5. New Business**

#### **A. Discussion regarding the FY 2024-2025 budget**

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about being against the amount of the police department raise but agrees that there needs to be some type of raise. Would like to see the data on overtime and the percentage of when the department is understaffed to see if there is a correlation. The overtime does not seem like a huge expense compared to the cost of increasing everyone's salary by \$7,500 plus benefits. Would like to see a list of all of the benefits staff get and a comparison to other municipalities that are comparable.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about having salary surveys of current and proposed within Brevard County, and Melbourne Beach is always near or at the bottom along with Indialantic. This is why the Police Chief would like to increase the starting wage which would require everyone else's pay to increase as well. Just because we are small does not mean the risk is not there. The current starting wage is \$42,800 and the proposed is \$50,000.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about getting a comparison statewide with other small coastal communities to figure out how much the raise should be, and compare the benefits as well because we might have better benefits.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about offering the least amount of benefits as well, and reviewed the numbers on page 20.

Commissioner Marivi Walker asked about the police being salary versus hourly, and spoke about the proposed wage would be above the new fair labor threshold for overtime which is around \$48,000.00.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about officers are hourly, and there is certain criteria to be considered an exempt employee.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about other municipalities have more detailed budgets including comparisons, lists of all benefits, and a breakdown so residents can understand it more easily. Recommended having the page updated to show how hiring additional officers will affect other items such as purchasing guns, but that the department will stay within the current budget for those additional expenses.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about once the budget is approved then the department has to stay within it.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting to see all of the additional compensation and be able to compare the starting salary current and proposed and all of the additional compensation.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how we do not have a lot of additional compensation. The health insurance is worse than an HMO because we have under 50 people. Even Indialantic has significantly better insurance because they have enough employees to go to the next tier. Some employees pay out of pocket as if they do not have insurance at all because it is cheaper since the deductible is so high. We do not offer vision or dental. Spoke about having the salary information that can be sent out now, and next week will send out the additional data on benefits.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about overtime should go down by about \$10,000 with additional officers, but the cost of the overtime will increase due to the salary raise.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about needing to have two people on and there are only a few people that can come in, so the same people are asked to come in and it can erode morale, but they do it because that is the structure of the department. A lot of times they take comp time instead of overtime. One employee who has been with the department for almost 20 years has only been home on Christmas 3 times, which is unacceptable. If fully staffed there would be other employees that could come in instead of there only being a few that can come in.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about the department adding days for training would decrease their days off, and just because there are more people does not mean those people will come in.

***Steve Walters – 416 Sixth Ave – Spoke about there being 10 officers when he was in the Police Department. The Police Chief just came on 90 days ago and now he says he needs 2 more officers. Regarding the raise what about the rest of the staff?***

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about having a new Police Chief, a \$7,200 proposed raise, plus 2 additional officers just seems like a lot. Spoke about how the budget for Satellite Beach is wonderful.

Vice Mayor Sherri Quarrie spoke about one of the current officers is an School Resource Officer and the County pays for it, and how each department is very committed to their budget.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about the Police Department is asking for the largest increase in this budget, and that the budget is lacking detail. She spoke about how the Town Clerk needs help, but we are going to hire additional police. Do the comparison places have deputy clerks? There is an actual defined need for why we need a deputy clerk even if it is a part-time or contracted position. We need more than a part-time 20

hour Code Enforcement Officer. Would be more willing to the Police Department requests if more traffic stops received tickets. Thinks some of the money should be transferred from the Police Department to have a full-time Code Enforcement Officer and a Deputy Clerk.

**Steve Walters – 416 Sixth Ave** – Spoke about the clerks at the meeting last night are the Town Clerk's friends and they are going to poach her. Town Clerks work all the time and still don't get caught up because there is a lot of work. Confident that she needs help, you can't keep putting this pressure on her.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about the Town Clerk needs to be able to go on vacation or go to training. Went in when the Clerk was gone, and was told you cannot see anything until the Clerk is back. It is becoming more apparent that we need a Deputy Clerk. Give the police a moderate increase, but not the 2 additional officers. Then transfer some of the money to get a Deputy Clerk and a full-time Code Enforcement Officer and then decrease taxes.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how she had a meeting today with the Town Clerk and will meet tomorrow with HR to discuss in more detail about the Clerk's duties and what would be taken on by a Deputy Clerk. Believes it is very important that the Police Department get at least one new officer and the \$7,200 increase. There is the potential to have the Code Enforcement position be full-time, however, she is unsure if the current employee would want to be full-time. Also, does not think that needs to be budgeted this year. Another option is having a second part-time Code Officer. We are going to lose Officers if we are working them to death, or if they can go to another close municipality for \$10,000-\$15,000 more.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about needing the comparison data to prove the increase is needed then she would vote for it. If you want to challenge something, the timeframe is based on when the minutes are signed.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about we can drop an Officer to get a Deputy Town Clerk, but it would not be in the best interest of the community to drop both Officers.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about if the Town is going to update the code on short term rentals, and get strict on them, then one part-time Code Officer is not going to be able to keep up.

Commissioner Marivi Walker spoke about a starting salary of \$50,000 is \$24.00 per hour for a Police Officer.

**Frank LaGrassa – 412 First Ave** – Spoke about wanting a budget that is easy to understand. These jobs could be filled in a heart beat. How many cops do you think will walk away if they don't get that much of a raise? Is turn over something we have always dealt with. Questions the need for a white glove service. Why compare to other Towns; instead see what it will take to get the job filled. Get someone in here that really knows how to recruit because it is a great job. Wants to see all of the benefits and salary.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about officers have left for other agencies. Our benefits and compensation are really low, so it makes it difficult to recruit even individuals right out of the academy.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about getting another employee when the cost of overtime covers the cost of the additional employee and asked for staffing data to compare each position per year. If there hasn't been an issue with staffing the current positions, then why add additional?

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how staffing is currently at the bare minimum, and residents expect what resident LaGrassa called white glove service. Indialantic's budget is over 6 million dollars, which is about 2 million dollars more than Melbourne Beach, which has a very limited income.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting a table of contents, an organizational chart plus additional pages with more information.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about this being only the budget workbook, and those additional pages will be included.

Commissioner Marivi Walker spoke about how people cannot make a living off of a \$42,000 salary. Does not want to pay more in taxes, but she is thinking of the working people.

***Bruce Larson – 1507 Pine St** – Spoke about when doing comparisons one of the most important parts is similar revenue. Then go into geographical things and crime rate, size, etc. Thought the fiscal year 25 budget was done pretty well and well thought through. You need to have data to show a reason for things.*

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about the 2 budget meetings in September are hearings to vote on the millage and budget, so the budget needs to be set before those meetings.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about the Town Manager asking her if there were any projects she would like to budget for, and she said nothing, she does not want to do anything other than reduce taxes and put 10-15% of the budget towards stormwater. Would like a policy on comp time where the salary is locked into the salary at the time it was earned not when it is used. Spoke about and asked questions related to the budget for Planning and Zoning, the Board of Adjustment, and the Town Planner.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about on page 15. The cost for the Town Planner is never fully used, so it was reduced. Increased legal to cover the special magistrate hearings. Spoke about page 5 is revenues, and to go to the Board of Adjustment it is really expensive with a \$5,000 deposit. Planning and Zoning reduced because we are now following the Code more closely which only requires multi-family and commercial go to the Board. In the past everything was going to Planning and Zoning Board even when it was not required by our Code.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting to keep the legal for Code Enforcement at \$26,000 and tightening the budget elsewhere to transfer to other places such as a Deputy Clerk and additional Code Enforcement. Would like to keep the Special Magistrate, but also have a Code Enforcement Board. Have the easier cases such as mowing the grass and unregistered vacation rentals go to the Code Enforcement Board to lower the costs and streamline things.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro asked if the Commission would be willing to allow her to figure out where to pull money from in order to budget for the things they requested.

***Bruce Larson – 1507 Pine – Spoke about there being enough funds for 10-15 magistrate cases. You are about 25% funded to handle all of the code enforcement cases. There will never be enough resources with what is currently budgeted. The upcoming short term rental magistrate case is the first one the Town has done, so let's get through one and see how it goes but the budget needs to be doubled, tripled, or quadrupled. We are running out of time, so focus on the big-ticket items in the budget.***

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about only convening the Special Magistrate once a month to hear all of the cases.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about the police can have cards to complete while they drive around Town, to document any needed maintenance such as lights out, and also track any code violations for evidence for a case.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the police can occasionally assist, but they cannot be dedicated Code Officers.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting to see global totals for items that are in multiple different departments. Asked for an email of all of the items that have been discussed so far.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about allowing her to figure out how to budget to add a Deputy Clerk, and add an additional part-time or full-time Code Enforcement Officer.

***Frank LaGrassa – 412 First Ave – Spoke about not needing to worry about Officers not doing their job because of low morale because they did not get a record breaking pay raise or having to work overtime because that is just part of the job.***

Mayor Alison Dennington asked for the expenses related to the Volunteers in the Fire Department, and the cost of gas for the marine rescue program.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about the only expense for Volunteers is the stipend.

***Bruce Larson – 1507 Pine St – Spoke about focusing on the big-ticket items such as Airbnbs that have homestead exemptions.***

**6. Adjournment**

**Commissioner Marivi Walker moved to adjourn; Vice Mayor Sherri Quarrie seconded; Motion carried 3-0.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.



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**Alison Dennington**  
**Mayor**

**ATTEST:**



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**Amber Brown, CMC**  
**Town Clerk**

