

**MINUTES
TOWN OF LAKE CLARKE SHORES
FIRST PUBLIC HEARING 2023/2024 TOWN BUDGET
SEPTEMBER 12, 2023
6:30 PM**

1. Call to Order

A. Roll Call

Mayor Gregory Freebold called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

The following officials were present:

Mayor Gregory Freebold
Vice Mayor Robert M. W. Shalhoub
President Pro Tem Valentin Rodriguez, Jr.
Council Member Robert O. Gonzalez
Council Member Jon maples

B. Moment of Silence, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance
(moved from Regular Town Council Agenda)

Mayor Freebold requested a moment of silence for Isabelle Fisher, Lt. Fisher's grandmother-in-law; Lisa Burns Small, Retired City of Temple Trace City Clerk and Jimmy Buffett who passed away recently.

Pastor Stan Snizek, Pastor of the New Life Alliance Church, gave the invocation, then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Presentation of the 2023/2024 Town Budget

A. Joseph F. Lo Bello, Town Manager

Mr. Lo Bello noted that this is the tentative budget and millage rate for the 2023-2024 FY. He noted the millage rate and budget will be adopted on September 27, 2023. He noted the total combined budget for the general fund and utility fund (enterprise fund) will be \$11,732,858. He also noted that the millage rate was lowered to 6.1000 which is 2.86% less than last year. He noted that this is 6.11% over the roll back rate of 5.7490.

He explained the Florida 3% Save Our Homes (SOH) cap and stated that those residents with a homestead exemption should not see an increase in the Town's portion of their taxes for the 2023/2024 fiscal year. He explained that increases in the State sales tax and the amount that the Town earns on interest rates this year has helped to lower the millage rate.

He noted the increased costs associated with the Town's property and liability insurance coverage and stated that he needed to increase the Town's budget to

cover this cost. He noted that staff is still negotiating with two different insurance groups for coverage at this time.

3. Council Comments

Vice Mayor Shalhoub – noted that he has reviewed the budget with Mr. Lo Bello and everything looks good. He thanked Mr. Lo Bello for his work.

President Pro Tem Rodriguez – noted that this is the first time that the millage rate has been lowered in more than 10 years.

Council Member Maples – noted that he also met with Mr. Lo Bello. He stated that he is excited to see the contingency fund and the combined budget amounts. He noted that Mr. Lo Bello has done a great job on the budget.

Council Member Gonzalez – did not have any comments at this time.

Mayor Freebold noted that he has reviewed the budget and everything seems to be in order.

4. Audience Comments

Timothy Daughtry, 1410 Keller Road – noted the 16% increase in the budget with a reduction in the millage rate of only 2.88%. He stated that the Town should lower the millage rate even further so the actual taxes could be lower not remain the same. He discussed ways that the Town could cut spending such as reducing the number of vehicles the Town utilizes and reducing the number of Town employees. He noted that the Town should sell the vacant property on West Lake Drive. He also noted the expenses for repairing the wall at the Arabian Road entrance and for the pickle ball court lighting. He stated that the Town has been paying for engineering services for the septic to sewer conversion and he still has not seen any plans for the project.

Victoria Williams, 7525 Alpha Court E – asked about the revenue and expenditure related to the vulnerability study.

Mr. Lo Bello noted that the Town received a matching grant in the amount of \$123,500 to research how sea level rise and climate change will affect the Town. The Town's match is \$30,500.

Fran Carlton, 8432 Waterway Drive – asked if the grant money could be used for anything other than the vulnerability study. It was noted that it can only be used for the intended purpose.

Victoria Prinzi, 1411 Carandis Circle –discussed the Police Department's house watch program and how it is being taken advantage of by property owners that are not full time residents. She suggested that the Town charge for this service in the same manner as the Town charges for false alarms. It was noted that the house watch program has been done in the same manner for over 30 years.

Chief Smith noted that house watches are done when the officers have the time to do so whereas officers respond to all alarm calls because there is no way to know if the property is being burglarized unless it is checked at the time of the call.

Fran Carlton, 8432 Waterway Drive – noted that there are some full time residents who utilize the house watch program because they are out of the area for 2 to 3 months at a time.

5. Adjournment

Motion made by Council Member Gonzalez to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 PM, seconded by Council member Maples; Motion carried (5-0).

Gregory Freebold, Mayor

Mary Pinkerman, Town Clerk