

**CITY OF FORT MEADE
SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2017**

A Special Meeting of the Fort Meade City Commission was held on Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at 6:00 P.M. at the City Hall Commission Chambers, 8 West Broadway, Fort Meade, Florida.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Manley.

2. ROLL CALL:

Mayor	Barbara Manley	Present
Vice Mayor	Richard Cochrane	Present
Commissioner	Robert Elliott	Present
Commissioner	Maurice Nelson	Absent
Commissioner	James Watts	Present

Staff Present

City Manager	Fred Hilliard	Present
City Attorney	Tom Cloud	Present
Deputy City Clerk	Melissa Newman	Present
Public Works Director	Jackie Cannon	Present
Finance Director	Breanna Smith	Present

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:

Pastor Marion Sotore, First United Methodist Church, led the invocation. Mayor Manley led the Pledge to the Flag.

4. ADDITIONS AND/OR DELETIONS

None.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

None.

6. PRESENTATIONS/AWARDS/REPORTS:

None.

7. PUBLIC FORUM:

Citizen comments for items not on the agenda (3-minute maximum length).

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Discuss and approve Polk Regional Water Cooperative Combined Projects Implementation Agreement.

Mayor Manley opened the public hearing.

Mr. Robert Beltran, Consultant for Peace Regional Water Cooperative working on behalf of the municipalities, presented the Commission and the audience with a presentation explaining why this project is so important. Mr. Beltran started with the members of the Cooperative including 17 municipalities and 2 water management districts working to manage the resources that are available to us to ensure future water supply. Mr. Beltran discussed the levels of the lakes, streams and rivers indicated on the map with red and green dots, green being good levels and red being below level. The purpose of finding an alternative water supply is to bring all the red levels up, restoring these resources.

Commissioner Cochrane asked the difference between have met and have not met minimum flow levels (mfl). Mr. Beltran explained that there are limiting factors to determine the minimum levels of each body of water to maintain its use, such as a certain species of fish or a recreational use.

City Attorney Tom Cloud pointed out 3 major things:

1. The State Legislator gave the Water Management Districts authority in 1972 to set minimum levels in lakes and rivers in the State of Florida.
2. The Peace River is used as a water supply in Sarasota and Charlotte Counties via the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority Peace River Plant.
3. If you have a condition where minimum levels are not met you will have a very difficult time getting a water use permit expanded or a new one. Mr. Cloud stated that why the red dots matter is that if you went out on your own to get a permit to enlarge supply it would be very difficult.

Mr. Beltran explained that according to historical data the projected deficits for Polk County would be about 64,000 MGD. Specifically, to Fort Meade the deficit will be .26 MGD or .55%.

Mr. Beltran explained the 3 projects that are being considered for alternate water supply.

Mayor Manley asked why the Peace River was not one of the projects since it is in the red.

Mr. Beltran stated that the District is already trying to recover the Peace River. Finding alternative sources will relieve some of the use of below level bodies of water.

Cindy Rodriguez, SWFMD representative, stated that since the Peace River is in the red no additional uses would be permitted for that area unless it is an alternate water supply.

Mr. Beltran stated that there are major costs associated with these projects. Phase one is a feasibility study to find the best alternative source at which time there is an option to opt out of the agreement and not go into phase two which will be construction.

Pastor Phillip Williams, 123 NE 3rd Street, Fort Meade, FL. 33841, asked where the District will get the 50% match.

Ms. Rodriguez stated that the District is committed to the 50% match and they are legislatively mandated to find alternative water sources. Ms. Rodriguez stated she is a third generation Polk County resident as well.

Mr. Williams stated that he speaks for the people of the community and they cannot afford an increase to their water bill. Mr. Williams asked how the City will come up with their share of the money. Mr. Williams asked how any of these proposed projects will directly impact Fort Meade, will these transmission lines connect to Fort Meade.

Mr. Beltran stated with these projects it will take the stress of the current water sources and free up more water.

Mr. Williams stated that his biggest issue with the project is that this will only benefit the urban areas and not the rural areas such as Fort Meade.

Ms. Brittany Sampson 16 SE 3rd Street, Fort Meade, FL. asked if this was another contractual agreement like FMPA, stating the more the residents have to pay the more poverty increases.

Mr. Joe Gammons, 1301 Mt. Pisgah Rd. Fort Meade, FL. asked if this had anything to do with President Trump's federal funding.

Ms. Carol Boone 725 NE 5th Street, Fort Meade, FL stated she was concerned about Fort Meade, there is not a lot of people here and the rates are steadily going up.

Mr. Bill Whitener 407 L. Lanier Rd., Fort Meade, FL stated he was concerned about personal usage of residential wells. Mr. Whitener asked why there wasn't a lock on the Peace River and why Polk County couldn't use Peace River for a water source.

Ms. Azzie Mickens 315 Sand Mt. Rd, Fort Meade, FL. stated that she was an elderly single woman on a fixed income and could not afford an increase on her already high utility bill.

Ms. Hilda Rogers 105 SW 3rd St., Fort Meade, FL. stated that there will be no lines for water extended here. There is no need for additional water because people are leaving and we have what we need for now.

Mr. Curtis Bankston 1370 N. Charleston Ave., Fort Meade, FL asked how this will impact Fort Meade. Mr. Bankston stated that banks are leaving town and nobody is coming here and we are already stuck in a long term contract we cannot get out of and don't need any more. Mr. Bankston stated that there are many more things to worry about like getting a grocery store instead of water 30 years from now.

Mr. EJ King 108 SW 3rd St., Fort Meade, FL. stated that is has been said that this project has been worked on for five years now however, the first time he has heard about this was at the last City Commission Meeting. Mr. King asked for Pastor Phillip to be able to speak for the people because he knows more about the issue. Mr. King stated that this is unfair to the citizens.

Mr. Beltran stated that this is a difficult decision but without water you cannot live and there will be no economic growth or resources for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. Mr. Beltran stated that he is a Polk County resident and cares about what happens here.

Mr. Reginald Whitehurst 515 S. Charleston Ave., Fort Meade, FL. stated that the only growth going on here is in Evergreen and Morrison cemeteries because everyone else is leaving. Mr. Whitehurst stated that the commission was voted in to take care of the people not to make others rich.

Ms. Dorothy Lewis 810 S. Morrison St., Fort Meade, FL. stated that not everyone is in good financial standing. We need to appeal to what is needed and what is best for the citizens.

Ms. Clara Russell 315 S. Oak Ave., Fort Meade, FL. stated that we don't need to do this now, God will provide. The people here can't afford more increases in utilities, someone needs to think of the people here.

Mayor Manley stated that this is not a decision to make someone else rich, this is to plan for the future, the future of our families. Ms. Manley stated that you have to raise the rates sometimes to provide the utilities for you. Ms. Manley stated that all five of the commissioners try to make the best decisions for the whole community and the citizens, to try to help Fort

Meade. Ms. Manley stated that they were all elected and if someone thinks they are not doing the right thing to get someone to run and elect them to do the job that they think should be done.

Commissioner Watts stated that you have to have infrastructure to be able to grow.

Mr. Rudolph Freeman 709 S. Pine Ave., Fort Meade, FL. stated that he has been here 60 years and does not see Fort Meade outgrowing its water.

Mr. Jimmy Barfield 107 SE 9th St., Fort Meade, FL., stated that years ago there where stores everywhere here including a grocery store and everything but the water is drying up here. Mr. Barfield stated that growth is coming this way but it's not coming to Fort Meade. Most of the people here are on fixed incomes and cannot afford any more increases.

Mayor Manley closed the public hearing.

- B. Motion Commissioner Cochrane, second Commissioner Elliott to approve the Polk Regional Water Cooperative Combined Projects Implementation Agreement phase one only and not raise water rates to cover the cost of the feasibility project.**

Motion to approve the Polk Regional Water Cooperative Combined Projects Implementation Agreement passed by a unanimous vote of 4-0.

9. NEW BUSINESS

None.

10. CITY ATTORNEY COMMENTS:

None.

11. CITY MANAGER COMMENTS:

None.

12. CITY COMMISSION COMMENTS:

None.

13. STAFF REPORTS

None.

14. ADJOURNMENT

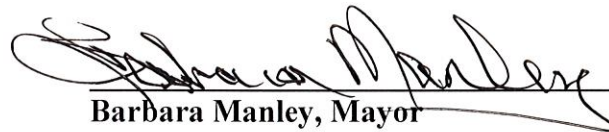
There being no further business to conduct, Motion Commissioner Elliott second Commissioner Watts to adjourn the Special Commission meeting of February 28, 2017 at 7:46 P.M.

Motion to adjourn passed by unanimous vote of 4-0.

ATTEST:



Melissa Newman, Deputy City Clerk



Barbara Manley, Mayor