

# City of Clearwater



## Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, May 24, 2022**

**6:00 PM**

**Morningside Recreation Center**

## **City Council**

**Special Council Meeting – Strategic Visioning and ARPA Funding  
Community Meeting**

## Roll Call

**Present:** 3 - Mayor Frank Hibbard, Vice Mayor Kathleen Beckman, and Councilmember Mark Bunker.

**Not Present:** 2 – Councilmember David Allbritton and Councilmember Lina Teixeira

**Also Present:** Jon Jennings – City Manager, Micah Maxwell – Assistant City Manager, Michael Delk – Assistant City Manager, and Rosemarie Call – City Clerk.

***To provide continuity for research, items are listed in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.***

### ***Unapproved***

#### **1. Call to Order – Mayor Hibbard**

*The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.*

#### **2. Strategic Visioning – Mayor Hibbard**

*Mayor Hibbard welcomed those in attendance and said the first part of the meeting would be dedicated to strategic planning. Community feedback will help guide City Council in developing the City's budget, aligning the City's limited resources with citizens' desires.*

*He asked attendees to rate the following categories, with 8 being the most important and 1 the least important: Neighborhoods, Improving Roadways and Traffic, Sustainability, Quality of Life (parks, rec centers, and libraries), Improving City Services, Economic Base (diversify it), Public Safety (Police and Fire), and Infrastructure (pipes, roadways, and city buildings). He said the budget is critically important as it reflects council priorities.*

*The Mayor reported the following scores:*

*Affordable Housing: 228*

*Quality of Life Services (parks, recreation, libraries, and trails): 197*

*Neighborhoods: 194*

*Sustainability (decreasing fossil fuels, solar, planning for sea level rise, decreasing carbon footprint): 168*

*Improve Infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, sewers and pipes): 132*

*Diversify the Economic Base (more jobs, US 19, expand non-residential tax base): 130*  
*Improve Roadways and Traffic: 115*  
*Public Safety (police and Fire): 115*  
*Financial Responsibility: 113*  
*Improving City Services: 61*

*One individual supported affordable housing and commented that the City should not be comfortable with people being homeless or families being split-up.*

*One individual supported infrastructure as their first priority because it is more than roadways. More infrastructure is needed to facilitate the increased demand for carpooling and bike lanes.*

*One individual said that “Diversify the Economic Base” was their last priority because they were concerned with the 8-story building complex being constructed. More consideration should be given to the surrounding homes.*

*One individual supported affordable housing and expressed concerns that prospective homebuyers cannot find anything within their price range.*

*One individual supported Neighborhoods and expressed concerns with the lack of sidewalk maintenance in the City ‘s older neighborhoods.*

*One individual said they placed all of their rating points in Sustainability; none of the priorities matter if the community does not have a livable environment.*

*One individual supported affordable housing and expressed concerns that affordable housing requirements in new developments are watered down during contract negotiations. Support was expressed for city economic development initiatives that assist local contractors and small businesses.*

*One individual supported infrastructure and public safety. A concern was expressed that the City continues to annex properties into city limits but has not increased police staffing.*

*One individual supported affordable housing and said that there is not enough available affordable housing units and the wait lists are long. The individual also supported infrastructure, which are needed to address vehicular traffic at Clearwater beach and lack of parking.*

*One individual supported Neighborhoods and expressed concerns that many residents at Prospect Towers are being forced out due to rent increases.*

*One individual supported affordable housing. A concern was expressed that individuals who have housing vouchers cannot find units within the City.*

### **3. ARPA Funding**

*The City Manager said the City will receive \$22,483,893 under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) program. Funds must be encumbered by 2024 and spent by 2026. Due to the timeframes, projects and programs identified to use ARPA funds should be close to shovel ready as possible. Staff has recommended the following proposed projects:*

1. *Startup funding for North Greenwood Community Redevelopment Agency - \$5 million.*

*These funds will help the North Greenwood Community Redevelopment Agency start its redevelopment efforts. Because the Community Redevelopment Agency's future funding is predicated on increasing the taxable value of the properties within the area, staff believes an initial investment in the neighborhood is appropriate to jumpstart these efforts. A centerpiece of the area is the North Ward School which the City has acquired and is ready to redevelop. Many other efforts are currently being planned in this area which is generally defined as a roughly 1.31-square-mile area to the north and northeast of downtown.*

2. *Fiber Upgrades and Broadband Connectivity - \$3.5 million*

*These funds will be used to upgrade the City's traffic management infrastructure, which will allow for better traffic management by using an Intelligent Traffic System that can be integrated with regional partner's systems. This will allow for a better flow of traffic, which will have positive benefits in the areas of local job creation, travel time to/from work, and sustainability. Additionally, the infrastructure upgrades create a more secure network infrastructure for the City to protect city assets and enhance provided services.*

3. *Affordable Housing - \$3.3 million*

*Housing projects will include down payment assistance, rehabilitation and new construction of single-family and multi-family homes, and energy efficiency improvements such as installation of cool roofs and solar panels when practicable. These funds will be used to assist households with incomes between 80 and 120 percent Area Median Income. While this income bracket will be the primary target, worthwhile projects assisting households below 80 percent Area Mean Income will also be considered.*

4. *Street and Sidewalk Improvements - \$2 million*

*These funds will be used to expedite roadway, curb and sidewalk improvements in low-income communities. Approximately \$1.8 million will be spent on milling/resurfacing roadways and approximately \$320,000 will be spent on sidewalk and curb improvements. This \$2 million will be in addition to the \$5.2 to \$5.7 million that is budgeted annually for street and sidewalk improvements.*

5. *Solar Panels for City Facilities - \$2 million*

*These funds would be used to kick off the City's solar installation program on city buildings. These investments will help reduce the costs related to energy use, allowing for operational funds to be reallocated or tax rates reduced.*

6. *Pinellas Community Foundation - \$1 million*

*Pinellas Community Foundation will solicit, evaluate and award up to \$1,000,000 to a nonprofit organization that offers an innovative and impactful concept for affordable and attainable housing in the City of Clearwater. Awardee must be able to complete the project by September 30, 2026.*

7. *Nonprofit Cultural Affairs Funding - \$1 million*

*These funds are proposed as a grant-based program. Nonprofit organizations in Clearwater that provide services within Clearwater will have an opportunity to request funding for programs that focus on cultural affairs. These could include area markets, concert or theatre events, or other community social opportunities that are trying to become financially feasible or who need financial assistance getting back to pre-pandemic levels of effectiveness.*

8. *Education – Grants or Partnerships - \$1 million*

*These funds will be used to provide a grant or partnership opportunity with a nonprofit or government entity for programs that focus on educational opportunities targeting students who have fallen behind academically due to the pandemic.*

9. *State Street Park Improvements - \$700,000*

*This project will provide for the development of State Street Park, located on the southwest corner of State Street and North Betty Lane. This property was purchased more than 30 years ago for the purpose of developing a neighborhood park. The present homeowner association has been very active in promoting this park and desires to have additional park improvements. Development of the park would preserve the tree canopy and allow the park to remain in as much of its natural state as possible. Development could include improved open field play areas and the addition of a playground, nature/walking trails, fencing, water fountain, parking, signage and other park amenities. Invasive plant species would also be removed from the park.*

10. *Clearwater Main Library Info Hub - \$625,000*

*This project would transform the first floor of the Main Library into a one-stop destination that supports and enhances citizen use of the new Coachman Park and downtown by relocating the library's most-used resources and services. To support this one-stop model, part of the reference and circulation staff would join to create an "information hub" on the first floor where patrons could get any*

*technical or library support or information about activities in Coachman Park.*

**11. Reimburse the City for COVID Expenses - \$2,358,893**

*The City expended \$1,379,498 of General Fund operating budget on the Clearwater Back to Business Grant and Professional Services Program during fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Additionally, the City expended \$1,741,242 city-wide on premium pay and vacation accruals for essential employees during the pandemic, per the City's emergency deployment and compensation policy. These two expenditure categories total \$3,120,700 and staff is recommending \$2,358,893 of reimbursement.*

*The City Manager said staff will be collecting input regarding the use of ARPA funds on the City's website and at the three upcoming strategic vision/ARPA meetings.*

*One individual supported using ARPA funds to address code enforcement issues found in neighborhoods; instead of fining homeowners, provide assistance to reach compliance.*

*One individual requested assurance that properties in the North Greenwood community will not become unattainable as the area is redeveloped.*

*In response to questions, the City Manager said staff has met with PSTA regarding fiber upgrades for smart signal systems, reducing the circulation time of buses equipped with detectable transponders. He said he is working with PSTA and the Jolley Trolley for a more robust transportation system in the area.*

*One individual suggested the funds be used for a light rail system and expressed concerns with the number of homeless in the Mian Library.*

*The City Manager said Imagine Clearwater includes plans to open the ground floor of the Main Library and make it more active. There is ample space in the Library to move the collection to an upper floor.*

*One individual suggested using the ARPA funds to assist businesses impacted by COVID.*

*The City Manager said there are grant programs for small businesses available via the Economic Development & Housing Department and Community Redevelopment Agency.*

*One individual suggested using funds to install child-friendly playground equipment at Crest Lake Park and bringing back the small neighborhood parks.*

*One individual expressed concern with the lack of diversity among city staff.*

*One individual expressed concern with the City's website; it reflects the community's welcoming spirit but lacks its diversity.*

*The City Manager said staff is in the process of updating the website, hopefully addressing the concerns raised tonight.*

*One individual suggested using ARPA funds to assist residents obtaining solar panels, making their home more energy efficient, and installing WiFi throughout the community.*

*One individual suggested using the ARPA funds for affordable housing projects, instead of the Pinellas Community Foundation proposal.*

*One individual supported the community meetings and suggested that the City approach the EPA for beach renourishment funds.*

#### **4. Adjourn**

*The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.*

Attest

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Mayor

City of Clearwater

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City Clerk