

**CITY OF CLEWISTON**  
**Special Commission Meeting**  
**August 28, 2017**

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The City of Clewiston City Commission held a Special Commission Meeting in the City Hall Commission Chambers Monday, August 28, 2017. The meeting was called to order at 3:33 p.m. by Mayor Gardner. The audience joined in reciting the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Commissioners Present:** Mayor Mali Gardner, Vice Mayor Michael Atkinson, Commissioner Kristine Petersen, Commissioner Julio Rodriguez and Commissioner Phillip Roland.

**Personnel Present:** City Manager Al Perry, Interim City Clerk Mary K. Combass, Finance Director Shari Howell, Recreation Director Lance Ramer, Police Chief Aaron Angell, Community Development Director Travis Reese, Utilities Director Danny Williams, Library Director Natasha Hayes, Code Enforcement Officer Debbie McNeil, City Engineers Tommy Perry and Scott Jones, Loretta Melanson, Jennifer Sandrell and City Attorney Gary Brandenburg.

**Visitors Present:** Brian Newhouse, Asa and Betty Godsey, Pepe Lopez, Ramon Iglesias, Tabatha Ralston, Chris Felker, Christine Howell, Donnie Hughes and Vivian Haney.

Mayor Gardner recognized Ms. Vivian Haney. Ms. Haney addressed the Commission and stated that she will be representing Hendry County in the Miss Florida Teen USA Pageant in December.

**ADDITIONS/DELETIONS/CHANGES AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA - none**

- 1. Approval of the final C-21 Bridge Canal Crossing Site Plan pursuant to Agreement No. 4600003609 Between the South Florida Water Management District and City of Clewiston** – This matter was discussed at the August 21, 2017 City Commission Meeting. A special meeting was scheduled to continue the discussion regarding this matter.

City Engineer Tommy Perry addressed the Commission and stated that the estimated cost to build the bridge at Site B is \$1.8 million and at Site C the estimated cost is over \$2.3 million. He explained that both locations use the same length of vertical wall and the structural engineer said he thought the sub structure would be significantly more for Site C because the bridge is longer and there is more road to and from the bridge. Mayor Gardner requested a copy of the figures for the record from Engineer Perry. Engineer Perry stated that Site C could potentially require reconfiguration of traffic which would require two lanes of traffic down through the picnic area. He also stated that he recommends Site B because the bridge would be shorter and it would therefore require less foundation and be less expensive. He further stated that it would be closer to the existing entrance so it would be more economical because there would be less work on the levee. He then informed the Commission that he has asked the US Army Corps of Engineers to leave material at the site where the contractor is currently working. City Manager Al Perry said the City will ask the State to fund 100% of the project in about 1 to 2 years. City Engineer Perry stated that he believes the current project at the levee will be completed in about 6 months and then the construction of the cutoff wall will be done and then the bridge can be built. Mayor Gardner stated that the crossing that is there now is not going to be removed until the cutoff wall is complete and that is why she feels the year 2022 is a more realistic timeframe for the bridge to be constructed. Commissioner Rodriguez asked if the current crossing will remain and City Manager Perry said it was not going to be removed until the new S169 structure was built and we thought we were going to have the bridge going up but now that has all changed. He stated the US Army Corps of Engineers is looking into it to see if they can afford to leave it there because if it stays, they will have to put money into it. City Attorney Brandenburg stated that when the cutoff wall was built in Pahokee, the access was completely shut down. Mayor Gardner stated a determination for the site is needed by September 1, 2017 and asked for public comments.

Mr. Ramon Iglesias addressed the Commission and asked Engineer Perry for the construction timeframe for Sites B and C. Engineer Perry stated that he feels Site C may be 60 days longer than Site B which is 180 days. Mr. Iglesias next noted that there is no retention area shown for Site C and asked what the final count for parking would be. Engineer Perry said that a water retention area is required for either location and parking spaces would be lost at either location.

Commissioner Roland expressed to Engineer Perry to make sure the arch on the bridge is long enough so that the tongue of a boat trailer does not bottom out on the arch. Engineer Perry explained that the vertical curve will keep that from happening. Mayor Gardner stated that she wants to make sure the palms are salvaged for landscaping in the City. She also stated that the plan to expand the boat basin area that was our dream will not work because of the wetlands that were there. She further stated that we are trying to get a bridge built in an economical way to meet the future needs of the town but still continue to work on adding parking. She added that the decision today is based on funding for this project and if there is no funding, a level crossing will be built.

**Commissioner Rodriguez made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, on the recommendation of City Engineer Tommy Perry to select Site B as the location for the final C-21 Bridge Canal crossing site. Vote 5 yeas, 0 nays**

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if there will be more opportunity once the bridge is done. Engineer Perry said there will be more opportunity and Mayor Gardner suggested that if Commissioner Rodriguez feels more boat launching is needed, he should push it to get it done. Mayor Gardner expressed that she feels the best option to follow for the future is the 724 acres north of town for passive recreation. She stated that would like this matter to move forward and feels we should have serious discussions with the South Florida Water Management District and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

- 2. Discussion regarding the Clewiston Police Headquarters Project** – This matter was discussed at the August 21, 2017 City Commission Meeting. The Commission agreed, at the recommendation of City Engineer Tommy Perry, to hold the bids and not award the contract at that time so other options could be reviewed.

City Manager Perry opened the discussion and informed the Commission that he has been negotiating to purchase the Seacoast Bank building to use as the new location for the Police Station and they have now agreed to work with the City on a purchase price. He said that Vice Mayor Atkinson has requested City staff meet to negotiate with the low bidder regarding construction of a new police station building on the lot behind Ace Hardware tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. He also said an appraisal on the Seacoast Bank building is favorable at \$690,000. He further stated the grant allows the purchase of an existing building and he along with the City Engineer and the City's Building Official agree that it would be a solid building to house the Police Department. He stated there are two large vaults that would work for the evidence storage and armory. He indicated the building will need a new roof. City Manager Perry stated that he would like to ask the Commission for approval to negotiate and enter into a contract to purchase the Seacoast Bank building if the meeting with the low bidder tomorrow is not favorable. Mayor Gardner expressed her concern with the request of a different location and changing the bid at this point. City Manager Perry stated the estimated cost for a new roof is \$100,000. Commissioner Rodriguez stated that he feels the City should move forward and negotiate a purchase price for the Seacoast Bank building. City Manager Perry stated that he has negotiated the price and the appraisal did consider the condition of the roof. Commissioner Rodriguez expressed that he does not want to go over budget. City Manager Perry stated the drive-through area would need to be enclosed for a secure sally port, different locations were being looked at for the holding area and the lobby would need to be secured. He also stated that he feels everything could be done within the budget. He added that Seacoast would like to rent the parking lot in front of the building for their ATM machine. Vice Mayor Atkinson expressed that he feels the best option would be to construct the new police station at the location behind Ace Hardware unless it is determined that the project would need to go back out for bid. Commissioner Petersen expressed her concern about what would be found in the ground and how quick a soil sample could be done and Mayor Gardner noted that that location was set aside for water retention for the future development of Ventura Avenue. Mayor Gardner stated that she feels the City's Utilities building would be a good location for the Police Department if the other options do not work out. Commissioner Rodriguez said his concern is the timeline and feels the purchase of the Seacoast Bank building is the best option. Vice Mayor Atkinson said if the Utilities building would work, he feels that should be looked at so that the Seacoast building is not taken off the tax roll. Commissioner Petersen stated that she feels that the City should move forward with the purchase of the Seacoast Bank building.

**Commissioner Petersen made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez, to move forward with the purchase of the Seacoast Bank building and get the project underway. Vote 4 yeas, 1 nay (Vice Mayor Atkinson voted nay)**

City Manager Perry said the owner of the Seacoast Bank building thinks it would take them 30 days to negotiate a lease on their new location and they could possibly be out of the building in three months and they agreed to make a request to close in the drive through for the sally port, re-roof and make some other revisions before they move out. Mayor Gardner next introduced Brian Newhouse, Hendry County Emergency Management Director. Mr. Newhouse addressed the Commission and stated for the record that he is also the E911 Coordinator for Hendry County. He also stated that the majority of all E911 costs associated with the movement of the Police Department would be picked up by his department.

City Attorney Brandenburg stated that he feels the purchase of the Seacoast Bank building depends on their ability to get out of the building in time for the City to start construction to meet the deadlines. He also stated that he does not know if the Bank would be willing to allow the construction to go on while they have customers coming into the building. Commissioner Petersen pointed out that all funding needs to be encumbered by June 2018. Commissioner Rodriguez asked City Manager Perry to let the Commission know if he sees any problems. City Manager Perry stated that they are meeting almost daily on this project. He also stated that he prefers Vice Mayor Atkinson to sit in on those daily meetings because of his knowledge. Community Development Director Reese asked City Manager Perry to get authorization from the Commission to go forward with the architectural firm. City Manager Perry stated that he hopes to have the plans of the Seacoast building from the architect tomorrow. Mayor Gardner stated that she was not sure that an architect was needed and did not want to go forward with that at this time. Vice Mayor Atkinson asked if the low bidder could be called so that he does not drive out for the meeting tomorrow. City Attorney Brandenburg stated the bid bonds can be returned because the time has expired. Community Development Director Reese stated that an architect firm would need to be selected. Attorney Brandenburg added that if you use design build on the improvements, you could use engineers that the City currently has under contract to put out a design build package and then have people come in and bid on a design build function with a specified date to complete an all in one package, otherwise you have to go out for bid twice. City Manager Perry stated that he feels the design build may not attract any the local contractors. Mayor Gardner stated a Special Commission Meeting could be scheduled in September if it is needed.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS - none**

**COMMENTS FROM CITY MANAGER – none**

**COMMENTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY - none**

**COMMENTS FROM THE CITY COMMISSION – none**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

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Mali Gardner, Mayor

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Mary K. Combass, Interim City Clerk