

**CITY OF CLEWISTON
Special Commission Meeting
October 3, 2022**

The City of Clewiston City Commission held a special Commission Meeting in the City Hall Commission Chambers Monday, October 3, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Petersen. The audience joined in reciting the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioners Present: Mayor Kristine Petersen, Vice Mayor Greg Thompson, Commissioner Mali Gardner and Commissioner Hillary Hyslope. Commissioner James Pittman was absent.

Personnel Present: City Manager Randy Martin, City Clerk Kathy Combass, Director of Operations Danny Williams, Police Chief Tom Lewis, Police Commander Tito Nieves, Code Enforcement Officer Debbie Clay and Fire Chief/Community Development Director Travis Reese. City Attorney Dylan Brandenburg attended via telephone.

Visitors Present: Terry Gardner, Ian Stone and Barbara Edmonds

Additions/Deletions/Changes and Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Hyslope made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gardner, to approve the agenda. Vote 4 yeas, 0 nays (Commissioner Pittman was absent.)

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

1. **Resolution No. 2022-089** – Resolution No. 2022-089 declares a state of local emergency for the city pursuant to Section 252, Florida Statutes.

Mayor Petersen summarized and read Resolution No. 2022-089 by title.

Vice Mayor Thompson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hyslope, to approve Resolution No. 2022-089. Vote 4 yeas, 0 nays (Commissioner Pittman was absent.)

2. **Resolution No. 2022-090** – Resolution No. 2022-090 approves the extension of the contract for debris monitoring services with Thompson Consulting Services LLC.

Mayor Petersen summarized and read Resolution No. 2022-090 by title.

Commissioner Hyslope made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gardner, to approve Resolution No. 2022-090. Vote 4 yeas, 0 nays (Commissioner Pittman was absent.)

Before the vote, Vice Mayor Thompson noted that he has no relation to Thompson Consulting Services LLC.

After the vote, Director Danny Williams stated that the contractor plans to begin picking up yard waste/vegetative type debris this week. He mentioned how any piles with mixed debris not eligible for collection by the city contractor were being addressed and noted that a special pick up fee may be charged to customers who do not separate their debris to meet established collection requirements.

3. **Hurricane Ian Emergency Response Departmental Updates** – Police Chief Tom Lewis, Fire Chief Travis Reese and Director of Operations Danny Williams

Police Chief Lewis thanked the Commission for their actions and support during the storm and expressed that it was a pleasure to work with Directors Williams and Reese. He then gave a brief overview of the things that were done before, during and after the hurricane. He

reported that he felt the right decision was made to not to have all of the traffic lights flashing before the hurricane because the heavier than normal storm evacuation related traffic was moving and there were no crashes. He then commented on the fires at MCM Paint and Little Caesar's. He stated the call on the fire at MCM Paint was received about 11:30 p.m. on the 28th and Sergeant Salgado reported the fire at Little Caesar's Pizza around 5:00 a.m. on the 29th. He noted there were no occupants in both incidents. Director Williams reported that there was no power at MCM Paint at the time of the fire; power in that section of the city was unavailable beginning at approximately 4:00 p.m. that afternoon. He also reported that there was an issue from the transformer to the panel inside the building at Little Caesars' which is believed to have contributed to the fire source. Chief Lewis stated that the police officers stayed out on patrol until the winds reached 45 mph and then the supervisors determined on a case by case basis whether or not they would respond to calls. He stated that the department is currently preparing an assessment of the Police Department facility. He stated the city 911 system did not go down at all and became the primary 911 center for Clewiston and Hendry and Glades Counties and also took rollover calls from Lee and Highlands Counties during segments of the storm period. He stated that the department has a young inexperienced staff that did a great job and there were no issues experienced related to the increased call volume. He reported that the elevated number of animals held at the animal shelter during the period have been networked out of the facility. Animal Services staff are expecting to have an additional influx of animals post-storm and are preparing for that circumstance. He then commented on issues with the administrative phone lines. He stated they probably should have done some load testing on their generator and mentioned that they may consider purchasing some type of internet connection redundancy along with additional VHF radios. Vice Mayor Thompson expressed that he felt a standard operating procedure should be developed and put in writing where the electric department should be contacted immediately if an officer responds to a humming, smoking or burning transformer. Manager Martin stated that he was proud that the city emergency communications system was able to continue functioning during this event and assist our neighboring jurisdictions. He noted that in his opinion, the city position of maintaining redundancy with emergency communication capabilities located on both sides of the county was proven to be a prudent course of action. It was then observed how well the city and county worked together during this state of emergency. Director Williams suggested that for redundancy in non-emergency and emergency communications, officials should consider options to have communication with both coasts. Mayor Petersen commented positively on the value of having Police Commander Tito Nieves' on staff with his level of knowledge of the technology, computer and phone systems. Manager Martin stated that Commander Nieves' role will be expanded to serve as a backup to the City's IT Administrator. Mayor Petersen also observed that she feels there should be a standalone telephone that could be used to contact an emergency manager within the EOC. Chief Lewis stated that he feels Director Williams' idea about having redundancy that is in a completely different location (e.g. in this case the example of an east coast source when a west coast storm condition exists) would likely solve that issue.

Director Reese reported that the City's maximum sustained winds reported, based upon information available at this time, were 58 mph. He commented on the preparations made by the Fire Department for the storm. He stated that when the power went down, they went into relying upon backup generation mode. He reported that the cascade system they use requires three-phase power and their generator only has single phase but when the power came back on, they were able to re-pump. Even though it was a close call, he feels it is still within acceptable limits to retain the current system. The department was able to adequately function. They went to full staff after 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday. They also typically have a "no-go" response policy after 45 mph winds are experienced. The officer in charge at the station will make a determination on whether to respond once wind speeds reach 45 mph. They had 23 calls for service after the storm began up to the 45 mph level. After winds reached 45 mph, the department performed 3 rescues. He then commented on the two major fire events and expressed his appreciation to the police department and sheriff's office for going door to door to get people evacuated from the toxic fumes in the vicinity. He noted that because the winds had died down, Palm Beach County responded to the second fire at the Royals Plaza where eight businesses were affected. He reported there also was a mobile home fire in Horseshoe Acres in Glades County where LaBelle also responded and took the lead in fighting that fire. He thanked Chief Lewis and the police department as they were an asset to the fire department as well as the community. Mayor Petersen stated that she would put the City's volunteer fire department up against a paid department any day.

Director Williams thanked Chief Lewis, Commander Nieves, Director Reese, Manager Martin and the Commission for their work during the storm to help everything run smooth. He reported that with the hardening of the electric system, only one feeder was knocked out, which was due to a tree and only 3 out of 2300 poles were lost. He expressed his appreciation to the city staff, the mutual aid response crews from Alabama and Michigan that came to support us, FMPA and Assistant Utilities Director Lynne Mila, who was on the phone on the east coast and was able to continue to communicate with Orlando. He stated the sewer plant never went down and seven spare generators were put out throughout the sewer system. Through mutual aid, the city also supported our neighboring cities of LaBelle and Lake Placid with limited generator assistance. He then stated that he has noticed that the flows in our sewer system get really heavy when everyone is home. He commented on the design of the force main at Saginaw and Esperanza and his plans to address some of the issues there in the third phase of the I & I program. He stated that he was impressed how staff maintained the parks and cleaned up the town after the storm. He also stated that he was pleased that Clewiston did not have much structure damage with the wind speeds that were felt. He believed there was some damage to the pavilion at Trinidad Park and the baseball field and some other miscellaneous structures. He then reported that Lee County had damages and lost the use of both transfer stations. He stated that because Felda is about 50 miles away, we are working with another county which is about 25 miles away for solid waste disposal in the interim. Three trucks will run tomorrow starting at 6:00 a.m. He stated that a contractor for yard waste/vegetative debris pickup is expected to be here on Wednesday and is working on getting some local contractors to assist as necessary. He confirmed that it was royal palm trees that caused the few outages experienced and stated that there were a total of four electrical service trucks that came to help us through FMPA. He also confirmed that people are encouraged to go underground with electric lines to their homes. Manager Martin noted that all new construction is required to go underground with electric lines. Director Williams added that there was one water line break which was caused by an uprooted tree.

Manager Martin stated that he has been through dozens of these kinds of events in his experience. He believes the city was as well prepared as possible for responding to this emergency. The city has applied additional resources to take care of some of the resiliency issues like tree trimming to minimize electrical outages from downed power lines. It is a blessing that we did not receive the worst of the storm in terms of wind speeds. He stated the staff to the extent practical will offer to support our sister cities who have helped us in the past. He commented on the process that the county and city will work on together to ensure we maximize our FEMA storm related reimbursements. He added that emergency response is one of the primary reasons financial reserves are needed particularly in states such as Florida where the probability of such events is elevated. He stated that he could not be more proud of the Commission, staff and citizens of this community on how resilient they are and have proven themselves to be once again in this declared hurricane event. His sincere prayers and best wishes go out to those who are hurting in areas more severely impacted. He announced that the city's collected hurricane yard waste/vegetative storm debris will be temporarily placed at the county airport property in cooperation with Hendry County on a site set aside for our contractor's use. After the storm collections and processing are complete, it will be permanently disposed of at an alternative site. He encouraged citizens to check the proper waste preparation information being distributed on the city's social media platforms, and for citizens to complete their preparations of the eligible waste and place it on the right-of-way as soon as possible. They should take advantage of the services being offered to address any yard waste/vegetative debris situations on their property expeditiously before these special collection efforts end and the regular limitations of city collections are again in place.

Vice Mayor Thompson stated that he feels the reported results of Clewiston's hurricane event response were not an accident, because the City had the foresight to invest in infrastructure improvements and proper planning. He is proud of staff for working as a team. He stated that the City is not lacking in leadership in any of our departments. He asked that we keep the west coast in our prayers.

Commissioner Gardner stated that former Commissioner Julio Rodriguez asked her to convey to each of Chief Lewis, Director Williams and City Manager Martin that he could not be more proud of the City of Clewiston for their response to the storm. He saw the work that was done and how services came back up so quickly, and he was very proud of the City.

Commissioner Gardner then mentioned that she heard that some of the local churches are gathering supplies and donations to deliver to churches and other areas on the west coast and encouraged everyone to do what they could to help out. Next, she commented on how thankful she was that through the years, the state and federal government came up with large amounts of funds to secure the Herbert Hoover Dike. That threat has been removed because the cutoff wall improvement project has been completed. She expressed her appreciation to Senator Scott, who was the former Governor of Florida, for making sure that project was done in an expedited manner. She then applauded our forefathers for envisioning a self-sustaining town and knowing that we had to take care of ourselves when our city was formed in 1925 as we have seen how each department is critical during such times of need.

Commissioner Hyslope agreed with Vice Mayor Thompson and Commissioner Gardner's comments. She stated that she has learned so much; before serving as a Commissioner, she never had the opportunity to see the city function this way. She stated that she knows that groceries and household items are becoming a scary topic for all of us when we look at empty store shelves. She then provided updates from Save-A-Lot, Wal-Mart and Walgreens on available supplies and groceries. She stated that we need to be hospitable to the visitors but we have to make sure that our citizens are able to get what they need too. She encouraged citizens to go to the stores early in the morning to get what they need. She then commented on how Ardis Hammock who serves on the South Florida Ag Foundation Board reached out to a previous attendee from the Florida Department of Ag and Consumer Services for help to get electricity to a dairy farmer who had contacted her needing power to milk their cows. Later that day, Mrs. Hammock received a call from Ag Commissioner Nikki Fried and then within a couple of hours the dairy farm had power. She stated that the upcoming Ag Foundation Dinner is a great opportunity for the community to build relationships with our legislative representatives at the state and federal level.

Mayor Petersen stated that the City has a great team that is calm, stalwart and unflappable; everyone knew what they were doing. She stated that calm manner of responding to emergency situations exudes out to our citizens. She also stated that she did call one of the colonels about the levee and was assured that they are looking out for us in terms of safety. She added that God has put together a team here and she was pleased to serve with the Commission.

Adjournment

Commissioner Hyslope made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Thompson, to adjourn the meeting at 6:22 p.m. Vote 4 yeas, 0 nays (Commissioner Pittman was absent.)

, Mayor

Mary K. Combass, City Clerk