

Observer Reports

December/January Voter

Ormond Beach Commission

Submitted by Susan Bayley

October 2, 2024

Commissioners were excited to know that a public art mural, owned by the city, will soon be placed on the side of a building in the Art District on East Granada. Two residents complained about abandoned houses, lots and cars, an ongoing concern. Another questioned the 3% landing fee at the city's airport.

October 15, 2024

After 20 years of service on the Commission, this meeting was Mayor Partington's last meeting. A good part of the meeting honored Partington. He received a standing ovation when he received a plaque recognizing his long service, with his family accompanying him. Residents and local civic leaders also praised him.

Hunter Wendelstedt was praised for his establishment of the national baseball umpire school that was established more than 20 years ago in the city. It has brought Ormond Beach national recognition as well as business to the city.

City Manager Shanahan reported the city got more rain than any other municipality in the county. There were two deaths in the city because of Hurricane Milton. Water rose quickly, with Central Park flooding; other flooding areas need to be addressed. About 10,000 sandbags were picked up. The local Outback provided many meals to first responders during Milton.

November 6, 2024

This meeting opened with sentimental recognition of one Commissioner, Susan Persis, who lost her election to replace Bill Partington as mayor of the city. There was a long ovation that followed a proclamation of service, flowers, and a plaque. Former mayor Carl Persis, who lost his election to the county school board, attended this touching meeting.

Deputy manager Finley reported a required EPA review on lead and copper in the city's water system indicated that the city does not have much of these elements in its system.

Manager Shanahan reported that Milton proved to be a hundred-year storm, with the city having 23 inches during the storm. Flemming Avenue was particularly hard hit with flooding. Commissioners recognize that flooding will have to be addressed in the year ahead.

Ponce Inlet Town Council

Submitted by Amy Legare

October 2024

Ponce Inlet weathered Hurricane Milton very well due to the resiliency work done over the past two years. A Citizen suggested electric cables be buried during the future sewer project. The Vice Mayor reported that FPL will bury wires if the underground is dry. Ponce Inlet is not dry so it is doubtful that the power lines will ever be buried. The Town community center was opened for residents and workers needing air conditioning and electricity.

Councilman Reinhart reported that the County has waived the four feet high, twenty feet wide dune sand requirement in place to support sea turtle nesting. The beach is not recovering from prior storms.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is due in Ponce Inlet the week of November 4th to continue work on beach restoration.

The mayor proclaimed October as Breast Cancer awareness month.

The mayor recognized the founding members of the Ponce Inlet Veterans Memorial group. A special presentation will be made during the Veterans Day ceremony to be held at the Veterans Memorial at the Ponce Inlet lighthouse park.

The Council approved retaining the old fire apparatus and enter a memorandum of understanding with local authorities to share the equipment when necessary.

The Council approved, after the first reading, a change to the Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) to include farmers markets as a major special exception use in the zoning district. The second reading will be in November. Applicants for this use exception will follow the Town's permit process.

The Council approved, after the first reading, amending the Code of Ordinance and LUDC to substitute references for the Code Enforcement Board with Special Magistrate. The Code Enforcement Board will be abolished. The changes will be effective once the magistrate is hired.

The mayor recognized resident Braeden Kopec for his national surfing championship.

The Council agreed that Ponce Inlet panhandling restrictions should be changed based on the ruling by U.S. District Court of the Middle District of Florida. Other Ponce Inlet Ordinances should be sufficient to address any potential panhandling issues.

School Board of Volusia County, Florida

Ann Harrell, Reporting

November 19, 2024

The Volusia County School Board met in regular session on November 19, 2024, 4:30 p.m. with Chairperson Jamie Haynes presiding. All Board members in attendance: Jamie Hynes (1), Krista Goodrich (2), Jessie Thompson (3), Donna Brosemer (4), Ruben Colon (5).

Highlights: Installation of newly elected Board members.

Donna Brosemer was installed as the newly elected Board member for

District 4, and Krista Goodrich was installed as the newly elected Board member for District 2.

Jessie Thompson was elected Board Chairman and Jamie Haynes was elected Vice Chair.

DID YOU KNOW? Volusia County School District has 64,000 students and 8,700 staff members.

The next regular School Board meeting is Tuesday, December 10, at 4:30 p.m.

South Daytona Observer Report

Olga Hernandez

Hurricane Milton brought some flooding to the city but they faired fairly well. They provided over 8000 sandbags to residents to deal with potential flooding. They were prepared by purchasing a Burcham Bagger Ultimate Sandbag Machine to help fill sandbags, and a dredging machine to clear the canals and prevent overflows. Another lift station are being replaced to deal with flooding. Council members and public works staff all participated in pre-storm preparations.

The commission candidates were re-elected for another term. They have been busy updating and renovating parks and community locations and infrastructure. The motto “Investing in Us” is taken to heart. Ageing clay sewer pipes, which are cracked and filter water out are being rehabbed by lining the pipes so they don’t overwhelm the lift station pumps. Lift stations are also being replaced to better deal with flooding.

Orange City

Submitted by Rhiannon Riegel

November 12, 2024

Much of this meeting was spent discussing flooding and other damage from Hurricane Milton. 6 of the 7 citizens who spoke to the council were residents near Miller Lake, which flooded during the storm on October 10, 2024. Not only is their area still flooded, but the water is also still rising more than a month later. Two significant concerns from all who spoke were that (1) there are commercial properties from which stormwater drainage is still being allowed to flow into Miller Lake and (2) Orange City, Volusia County, and the St. John's River Water Management Board have all been unable or unwilling to resolve this issue.

Dale Arrington, City Manager, presented the council with then vs. now photos of structural and street damage and flooding from Hurricane Milton. She provided a summary of the impacts from the storm, as well as a plan and preliminary budget for addressing the outstanding issues. Regarding the concerns brought up by the Miller Lake residents, Arrington reiterated that their land is outside the city limits, so the city is unable to easily step in and fix the problem. Private drainage systems are not managed by Orange City. Volusia County requested a call for planning studies. Orange City submitted a request for County funding to conduct 6 drainage studies, including Miller Lake. Arrington also said that the city would do everything in its power to work with Volusia County, the private property owners, FEMA, and the commercial business owners to find a solution as soon as possible.

No items were pulled from the Consent Agenda, no first reading ordinances, no second & final reading ordinances, no resolutions.

Utilities Services Director Robert Lawler gave a Lead and Copper Rule compliance update. No lead was found during the city's testing of the plumbing. Issues that were found, such as galvanized or unknown materials, are being addressed. Lawler also presented the South Water Treatment Plant preliminary design and SRF facility plan. Council approved the Work Order and allowed it to be executed.

Next meeting is November 19, 2024, a Special Meeting to swear-in newly elected officials and celebrate Mayor Blair's years of service.

Daytona Beach City Commission

Submitted by Lucy

Daytona Beach City Commission

At their Oct. 16 meeting, the commissioners dealt with several measures that support opportunities for more affordable housing. They repealed a section of the City Code related to rentals of single-family housing. They approved a change in the Land Development Code permitting “five-foot minimum side-yard setbacks on lots 50 feet wide that can be used for single-family dwellings which qualify as affordable housing.” The commissioners also voted to permit a zoning change allowing construction of a “mixed income, multifamily complex” with 62 residential units in the midtown area where more new and affordable housing is needed. Lastly, they approved the creation of the Daytona Beach Essential Housing Opportunity Program Trust Fund.

Four weeks after Hurricane Milton, at their Nov. 6 meeting, the commissioners approved the expenditure of up to \$1,500,000 for hurricane recovery for two grant programs: the Hurricane Milton Residential Recovery Assistance Grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 and the Hurricane Milton Small Business Recovery Assistance Grant in the amount of \$500,000. The City Manager is authorized to set up the specifics of each program.

At the Nov. 20 meeting, commissioners approved a zoning change for a 0.74 acre of land to allow Homes Bring Hope, LLC to construct a 6 lot single-family residential subdivision. This will be affordable housing that may be offered to individuals and families who are at “80% or below the Area Median Income (AMI), adjusted for family size.”

One of the final items on the agenda approved at that meeting were lists of 22 State and 11 Federal funding priorities for 2025. Some of the items on the State list are: securing more funds to help people with mental health and substance abuse problems, funds for building affordable workforce housing, and support for infrastructure projects. On the Federal government list, the City has four environmental priorities, one of which is funding for beach renourishment, an issue that has become more pressing in the aftermath of two hurricanes in just two year’s time.